To the End

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To the End

by angstytimelord

Summary

Will struggles against desires that he's sure he shouldn't have -- or should he?

Run

"You don't really believe what you're saying, do you?" Dr. Lecter frowned, leaning across the desk to stare at Will. "That's far too pedestrian an explanation, Will. You need to dig deeper than that. His psyche is much more disturbing, and you know it."

Will shook his head, closing his eyes. "You're right." He took a deep breath, reaching inside himself, trying his best to shut everything else out and *think*. As much as he didn't want to get into this criminal's head, he knew that he had to.

If he didn't, there would be more deaths. They would pile up until they could catch this guy. And even though it wouldn't be his fault, indirectly, he would feel that it was.

He always felt that way. It was a pain inside him that never went away.

When he opened his eyes again, Doctor Lecter was still watching him; the other man was standing up now, leaning forward, his hands placed lightly on his desk. His gaze was searching, as though he was trying to see inside Will's head.

Inside his soul.

Those eyes could pierce through any veil he tried to pull over his emotions. Lecter could see everything he knew, everything he felt. There was no escaping from that gaze; even when they weren't together, those eyes followed him, seeing into the heart of him.

It was unnerving. But, at the same time, it was comforting to know that there was another person on the planet who knew him so well.

Closing his eyes again, he tried to concentrate on the murders they were trying to solve, on the psyche of the man who was committing them. It was as though his mind hovered on the edge of discovery, peering into a window that was shrouded in mist.

Those mists weren't parting yet. But they would. Eventually.

He always found the person he was looking for. He could always put himself into their particular mindset; he could always *think* like them. It was disconcerting, it wasn't always pleasant -- but somehow, it always worked, even though there were times when he wished it didn't.

This was one of those times.

He felt dirty just thinking about this bastard. He felt as though his skin was crawling, turning inside out, leaving him vulnerable and exposed.

Not just exposed to the strands of thought that were slowly starting to connect him to this killer, but vulnerable to the man who was in the room with him now. Vulnerable in a way that frightened him. vulnerable in a way that brought all of his desires to the surface.

He didn't want to admit to those desires. He didn't want anyone to know that they existed; he wanted to keep them hidden, to sublimate them, to convince himself that they were just an aberration that would go away with time. He didn't want to set them free.

But he knew they were there.

And so did the man who was here in this room with him now.

He could sense Lecter's presence next to him; he didn't have to open his eyes to know that the other man was right in front of him. He knew that when he opened his eyes, he would see Hannibal's face -- the face that he longed to reach out and touch with his fingertips.

Now Hannibal was moving away slightly, moving to stand behind him. Will could feel his muscles tighten, feel his breath hitch in his throat.

Why were they engaging in this ritual mating dance? Hannibal had to know what was in his mind; try as he might, he couldn't keep that desire out of his eyes. Others might not notice it, but Lecter saw everything. And he wouldn't mistake what it meant.

He opened his eyes, trying to push the desire back, wishing that it wasn't rising within him. He didn't want to feel this way about Lecter, didn't want to bring personal feelings into their working relationship. It wasn't right. It didn't *feel* right. But he couldn't help it.

He couldn't help how he felt. And he couldn't stop that rising tide.

Hannibal was standing behind him now, close, so close. His breath was warm on Will's skin; Will knew that if he took another step closer, those arms could wrap around him, draw him back against that hard, lean body. Just one more step, and everything would change.

That breath was so hot on his skin. He could *feel* the other man's closeness, but he wouldn't tell the doctor to step back. He wanted them to be even closer. He wanted the heat of bodies, of desire, of passion. He wanted it more than he could put into words.

Will wanted to drown in that heat, that closeness. But at the same time, he knew that if it continued to grow, he would come undone, melt away in the heat.

Hannibal was even closer now, his breath like molten lava trickling down Will's neck.

Too hot. Too close.

This wasn't how it should be. Somehow, the balance was off. This didn't feel like two people who desired each other starting to come together, to take small steps towards each other. No, this felt more like predator and prey. And he knew clearly which one he was.

He didn't even have to think about it. He would always be the weaker specimen when it came to whatever relationship he had with Hannibal. Try as he might, he would never get the upper hand -- and there was an oddly comforting edge to that knowledge.

But at the moment, he didn't feel comforted. He felt panicked.

This wasn't what he wanted. If he and Hannibal were to come together in a way that would satisfy all of his dreams and lay them to rest, then it couldn't be like this. They had to be on equal ground, partners. But that would never happen. Not with this man.

Hannibal would always be in control. He would always be the stronger of them, and Will knew it. If he were to surrender -- no, *when* he surrendered; that was inevitable -- he would be giving himself over to a power far stronger than he could ever imagine.

But he wasn't ready for that now. So, he did the only thing that he could do; he did what his panicked senses screamed at him to do, as the instinct kicked in.

He ran.

Turn Back

Chapter Summary

> Will knows that he has to go back to Hannibal's house and face the desires that he can no longer keep hidden.

He had to go back.

That was the only thought in Will's mind as he lay in bed, tossing and turning and wishing he could think of anything else but the way he'd run out of Dr. Lecter's office the day before. He'd made a fool of himself, without knowing exactly why he'd done so.

One part of him was sure that if he put enough personal distance between himself and Lecter, he would be safe. Safe from wanting, safe from needing, safe from the desires that seemed to pound at him every second of every day, especially when he was near Hannibal.

Hannibal. Funny how he thought of his psychiatrist by his first name.

When he was trying to keep a safe distance between them, the other man was "Dr. Lecter" in his thoughts. Any other time, he was Hannibal -- the man who Will wanted with a passion that he'd never thought he could possibly be capable of feeling.

Did Hannibal *know* how he felt? Could he possibly guess? Will wasn't sure, but if anyone was capable of divining his emotions, then it was Lecter.

He should know by now that there was no safe distance. There was no place he could to where Hannibal wasn't able to come; the man knew him better than he knew himself. Which was one of the reasons that Will wanted him so desperately.

It was a need that went beyond the physical. He *needed* Hannibal's knowledge of who he was; he needed to be with someone who understood him, who felt comfortable with him and didn't look at him like he was some kind of freak in a sideshow.

Hannibal and he fit each other like a second skin.

He'd known that from their first session. He had looked into those eyes and felt as though he was drawn into the other man, as though Hannibal was searching his soul. There had been no doubt in his mind that the man in front of him would change his life drastically.

And Hannibal *had* changed his life. He had never spent hours thinking about anyone before. He had never fantasized about being with anyone else, never had another person invade his dreams and make him wake in a cold sweat, in a daze of *wanting*.

More than that, he had never felt as though any other person was drawing him out of himself, looking at his naked soul and finding it to their liking.

Hannibal knew him in a way no one else did. And he *needed* someone in his life who knew him that well, someone who could push him further than he was willing to go on his own. He needed Hannibal in his life -- as more than just his doctor.

That was why he had to go back.

If he didn't, then he would be tacitly saying that he didn't need this relationship as badly as he did. And he would more than likely be giving up any chance of pushing the doctor/patient relationship they shared now into another dimension, of taking things a step further.

Will wasn't sure that he was ready for that step; running away like he did had proven that he wasn't in a state of mind to push against the barriers around them yet. But he knew that every time he saw Hannibal, he was moving closer to bringing those barriers crashing down.

If he kept running away from Hannibal, then he would never know if what he wanted so badly could actually happen. He would never have the courage to open that door.

He didn't want to spend all of his life wondering, didn't want to face the "what ifs." He wanted to gather up his courage and break those barriers down, to see what could happen between the two of them if he could only literally lay himself bare before the man he wanted.

That was much easier said than done.

Will's lips quirked into the semblance of a wry smile. How many times had he told himself that it shouldn't be so hard for him to open up to Hannibal about what he truly wanted, but had then backed away from doing so? More times than he could begin to count.

Hannibal probably thought he was a coward. He had no doubt that the other man knew exactly what he wanted; he wouldn't have been standing so close, practically breathing down his neck, if he hadn't known precisely what effect that doing so would have.

Doctor Lecter was no fool -- and he could read people much better than anyone else Will had ever known. He had no secrets from this man, none at all.

That in itself was frightening. There were some secrets that he needed to hold close, to keep to himself until he was ready to let them go free. But Hannibal had a way of divining all of his secrets, pulling them out of him one by one and exposing them to the light of his scrutiny.

He should have known that there could never be any secrets between them.

Will sighed, sitting up in bed and running a hand through his hair. He glanced at the clock, knowing that it was far too early in the morning for anyone to be up, but knowing that he had to go back to Hannibal's house. This had to be out in the open. Now.

He didn't have to explain his earlier behavior; Hannibal would know what it had meant. All he had to do was show up at the doctor's door, and try to explain himself while Hannibal listened. He had to go back, had to try to get back onto the path he'd wandered away from.

It was time for him to turn back, to retrace his steps to see if he could come back to the place where he belonged. He'd strayed too far from that path, and he had to find his way back onto it. IF he didn't, he could end up wandering around lost forever.

He wouldn't technically *be* lost -- he would still be right here, where others needed him to be. But he would have lost his anchor, the rock that he needed to cling to.

Hannibal was that rock. He always had been.

It was no mistake that he had found his way to this particular doctor. There had been a spark between them ever since the first time they'd met -- and even though his senses screamed at him to run away when they got too close for comfort, he couldn't bring himself to break the tie.

He needed Hannibal, and that need was growing stronger with each passing day. There was nothing he could do to assuage it, to sublimate it. He had been trying to do that, but it wouldn't work any longer. He had to turn back to the path he'd been on, before it was too late.

At this point, it didn't seem to matter if that path might lead to his destruction. It was inevitable that he should follow it to the very end, wherever it might lead.

Sighing, Will pushed the covers back and swung his legs out of the bed, deliberately placing his feet firmly on the floor and standing up. He had to go to Hannibal's house *now*, before he lost his nerve. He had to show the other man that he wasn't going to run away.

It was inevitable that he turn back. He had no other choice.

Inevitable

Chapter Summary

He'll come back. After all, it's inevitable.

He would be back.

Hannibal didn't doubt that for a moment. Glancing at the clock on the kitchen wall as he sipped his first cup of coffee of the day, he allowed himself a slow smile, thinking of what it would be like when Will showed up at his door, fumbling with apologies.

Would he accept those apologies? At the moment, he wasn't sure. He would have to see what Will could come up with, and how he felt about the young man's hesitant progress to where he already knew they should be. He was getting rather tired of waiting.

From the first moment he'd seen Will Graham, he knew that this young man was for him. That rush of desire had been intoxicating, almost overwhelming.

It wasn't love; far from it. There was no word complicated enough to describe what he felt for Will. Definitely not love, yet much more than mere physical desire. Lust would burn out quickly; what he felt for Will had so many other connotations, so many different meanings.

Will probably wouldn't survive their relationship. That was a pity.

It didn't matter how badly he wanted Will in the physical sense, Hannibal reflected, stirring sugar into his coffee.Eventually, after he'd had Will in every way possible, after he had broken him and then put all of those lovely pieces back together, he would grow bored.

That was a shame, but it was the inevitable end of what they would have. He didn't for one moment think that Will wouldn't be a victim at some point; it remained to be seen just how long he would last, and how absorbing this relationship would prove to be.

He had no doubt that Will would satisfy him for quite a while. That mind was fascinating; it would take him a while to discover all the twists and turns of Will's psyche.

But he eventually would, and then would come the downward spiral, the inevitable winding down. He accepted that long before it happened, but he wasn't going to dwell on it. The two of them could have years; it might take that long to know Will in every way possible.

This wasn't the time to think about the end. This was only the beginning.

How long would it take Will to show up at his door? Given the fact that Will never slept well, it should be soon, Hannibal told himself, narrowing his eyes as he gazed into his coffee cup.

He was almost positive that it would be within the hour; Will wouldn't waste any time.

He knew the other man far too well. He knew what Will needed, and more importantly, what he wanted. He knew that better than Will did himself; he was more willing to reach into that darkness lurking inside Will and pull out whatever he discovered hiding there.

Will was afraid of that darkness. In some ways, he embraced it, as in his work with the FBI. In others, he ran from it -- as he had last night.

Hannibal sighed, shaking his head. In some ways, watching Will run from what he most wanted and had such a hard time admitting to was amusing. But in others, it was damned annoying. How long would it take him to finally capitulate? This waiting was taking forever.

However, he was good at waiting, he reminded himself sternly. He didn't need for Will to come to him too soon, before he was ready to admit to all of his desires and to see them carried out. If he did that, then he would only run away again -- maybe for good this time.

No, he couldn't allow that to happen. Not when he was so close.

He'd have to handle Will very carefully indeed. He couldn't take the chance of losing this young man. Will was so petfect for him, such a malleable lump of clay just waiting to be formed in the image that Hannibal wanted to cast him in, even though he was unaware of it.

Will didn't want to face his own desires, but he would soon learn to. It wouldn't be easy for him -- and he wasn't going to make it easy, Hannibal reflected. Will needed to collide with those desires, wrestle with them, and finally submit to them.

He would be doing Will a grave disservice if he made it easy. Those desires weren't meant to be sublimated or ignored; if Will kept them buried deep inside, then they would eventually eat him alive, and he would become that which he now hunted. It was inevitable.

Hannibal closed his eyes, savoring the sight that came to his mind. Will, naked and helpless, bound to the four posters of his bed, begging him ....

Begging him for what? Ah, that remained to be seen. He wanted to believe that Will would beg for more, but that probably wasn't in the cards -- at least not for a while. It would take some time to make Will accept those inner desires, and to beg for more of what he needed.

But he eventually would. He couldn't turn away from those desires forever.

Sooner or later, he would have to embrace them. He would have to admit that he had been born for Hannibal, born to be his slave -- and eventually, his victim. Because, as regrettable as it might be, Will *would* be a victim. No, he would be *the* victim. The ultimate victim.

Nothing would be sweet than making Will submit to him, than stripping away all of those inhibitions and finally uncovering the neediness beneath. He would subjugate Will, little by little, turn him into what he had been meant to be. And then, when it was all over ....

Then Will would die. A brilliant, beautiful, breathtaking death.

But for now, Will would live. Probably for quite a while yet, Hannibal mused, tapping his fingers impatiently on the table as he glanced the clock again. He didn't fool himself that it would be easy to break down all of Will's barriers. It could take years.

He was a patient man. He could spend years breaking Will Graham down and putting those pieces together again, making the young man the *piece de resistance* of his experiments.

It didn't matter if Will acquiesced or not -- he would be talked into doing so, convinced of the need for him to explore those desires rather than run from them. Actually, that could be fun, Hannibal thought with a smile. He would love to see Will's progression from defiance to submission.

And he *would* submit. Hannibal would make sure of that. In the end, there would be no way that Will would be able to say no. His desires would override his need for control, and once that happened, he would be caught in a web that there was no escaping from.

That submission would only be a delightfully delicious beginning.

Hannibal smiled again as he heard a hesitant knock on the front door. Will was here, and the game could begin. He had made the first move, taken that first step towards his end.

He rose to his feet, lifting his coffee cup to his lips and slowly draining it. He would be civilized when he opened the door to Will, of course. Invite him in, offer him coffee, and let him talk, however awkward his words might be. Then he would make *his* first move.

He would be the eventual winner of this game. After all, it was inevitable.

Disappear

Chapter Summary

> Will hesitates on Hannibal's doorstep, thinking over all of the reasons why he shouldn't be here.

Will stood on the doorstep of Hannibal's house, staring at the wooden portal in front of him. Hannibal was in that house, somewhere on the other side of the door, and yet he couldn't quite bring himself to knock and move in the direction that he wanted to go in.

Why was he so hesitant? Why did he feel as though he would be stepping into danger if he crossed this line? Why were his senses screaming at him to turn and run?

This wasn't a mistake. This was what he wanted, what he'd wanted since he'd first met Hannibal. He *wanted* to tell this man how he felt, wanted to let his desires pour out. He *had* to do this; if he didn't, then he would explode.

He couldn't keep these desires bottled up any longer.

It was past time he told Hannibal how he felt -- though he wouldn't be surprised if the doctor had guessed it already. Hannibal was perceptive that way; there were times when he seemed to know how Will felt without one single word being said.

What if he didn't feel the same? Will wanted to push that thought to the back of his mind and refuse to even countenance it. But the question remained, big and bold and bright in the forefront of his thoughts, making him wonder if this was indeed a mistake.

What if Hannibal couldn't stand to be around him after he confessed those feelings? What if he was repulsed by them? That was a definite possibility, too. He might not outwardly show that repugnance, but Will would know if he felt it. He would know.

He would be able to sense it in the way that Hannibal looked at him, in the way that they spoke. It would be there, hanging between them, an elephant in the room.

He wasn't ashamed of wanting Hannibal; it didn't bother him that he was attracted to another man. But what if Hannibal couldn't accept that attraction, and didn't want to act on it? Will would be crushed, all of his desires going unfulfilled for the rest of his life.

If that happened, he'd never be able to face Hannibal again.

Maybe it would be best if he turned around and went back home. Maybe he should forget about the dreams he'd been having about Hannibal, the desires that were struggling to break

free. Maybe he should spend the rest of his life trying to sublimate those desires, to ignore them.

Will closed his eyes tightly, shaking his head as though to dislodge that thought. No. He couldn't simply go back to where he'd been before he had met Hannibal, before the other man had become his psychiatrist. He couldn't take that many steps backward.

Okay, so maybe it was wrong for him to want to have an intimate physical relationship with the man who was his doctor. But people did that all the time, didn't they? It wasn't like he would be the first. He would just be joining a long line of people who'd done the same.

That is, *if* Hannibal wanted him, too. And he had no way of knowing just what the other man thought or felt. Hannibal kept his emotions close to the vest.

They had a friendship; neither of them could deny that. But Will wanted much more than a friendship, and he had no clue whatsoever to what Hannibal wanted. He wouldn't even hazard a guess -- though he thought that he'd seen desire flare in Hannibal's gaze more than once.

Hannibal wanted him. He had to believe that.

But what if he was wrong? He took a deep breath, not opening his eyes, trying to focus on that question. If the object of his desires didn't feel the same, what would he do? What were his choices? They seemed pretty limited; in fact, they didn't seem like choices at all.

He'd never be able to look Hannibal in the eye again; he'd be too embarrassed. He would have to start over again with a new psychiatrist, and that wouldn't be a help to him at all. The two of them already had too much of a past history; Hannibal knew too much about him.

So, he would have to keep seeing Hannibal on a professional level, and that would only make the wounds in his heart deeper every time they saw each other.

But if he turned away, if he tried to sublimate those desires, it would be just as bad -- and the wounds to his heart and soul would never have a chance to heal. They would just keep growing, digging deeper, eating away at him until they swallowed him whole.

Will took another deep breath before opening his eyes again.

He focused on the door in front of him, knowing that he had to lift his hand and knock. If he didn't, then he might as well not be here. Standing on Hannibal's doorstep arguing with himself wasn't getting him any closer to achieving his objective.

How could he look at himself in the mirror again if he didn't do this? He had to be brave enough to take the reins of his own future into his hands; if he wasn't, then he would despise himself forever. He would spend his life wondering about what might have been.

That wasn't acceptable. He had a hard enough time facing himself and his own abilities; the last thing he needed was a reason to despise himself. His sessions with Hannibal were all about trying to understand and accept what he could do; he didn't need to impede that progress.

Of course, he wasn't technically one of Hannibal's patients; what he called their "sessions" were simply two friends talking. Maybe that was why he had fallen so hard; maybe it had happened over time, as he'd opened up more and more to the enigmatic doctor.

Now, he didn't feel that he could keep a grasp on reality without those talks to anchor him. The more work he did for the FBI, the more unreal his world seemed to become.

He *needed* Hannibal to keep him grounded.

He needed the stability of those sessions, needed to know that there was at least one person in the world who understood him. As the world around him became progressively more surreal, he needed that lifeline to hold on to. If he didn't have it, he would .... disappear.

Without Hannibal to keep him grounded, the person he was would eventually get lost in the unreality that he had to deal with every day. He would slip into someone else's mindset -- and never be able to come out of it. He would be trapped there forever.

He didn't want that to happen. Which was why he needed more of a physical relationship with Hannibal, and not just the professional one they shared now.

Not only that, but he was in love with the other man, he told himself. He couldn't deny that fact; he'd tried to ignore it for a long time, but he was no longer able to push the truth out of his mind. He didn't just want Hannibal, he *needed* him. He loved him.

The thought brought a wry smile to his lips. Loving Hannibal was a scary proposition.

Now why would he think that? he asked himself with a frown. Loving someone shouldn't make him feel that he should tiptoe carefully across broken glass, that he should watch his back. He should be able to give himself to the person he loved fully and completely, with no hesitation.

Maybe he'd be able to do that -- if the person wasn't Hannibal Lecter. He didn't know why, but something told him that he was entering a dark and dangerous place.

Hannibal wouldn't let him disappear. He was sure of it. Hannibal would be his lifeline. He had to think in the positive sense, to throw himself into this with all of his heart and soul.

Will took another deep breath, then raised his hand and knocked.

Into His Own Hands

Chapter Summary

The first step towards his ultimate victory has already been taken.

Hannibal smiled when he heard the knock on the door. Ah, victory was sweet.

He hadn't really doubted that Will would come to him; that was a foregone conclusion. However, he *had* worried that Will might convince himself that giving in to his obvious desires would be doing the wrong thing, and that he would be safer not to.

Of course, Will had chosen the more dangerous path; that was something he could never resist doing, even when he knew that he might be taking his life into his own hands. It was one of the things that drew Hannibal to him; he couldn't help flirting with disaster.

It seemed a shame that their relationship would end up destroying Will, Hannibal thought with a twinge of regret. He was such a rare spirit.

But that was the way of the world, Hannibal thought with a shrug. Will had to die. But it wouldn't happen right away, fortunately. He would be able to toy with the young man to his heart's content before ending his life. And he intended to enjoy every moment of it.

He would break Will down, and then put those pieces back together in the way that *he* chose. When he was done with Will, he would belong exclusively to Hannibal Lecter; he wouldn't be able to separate his will from that of his master.

It would be a beautiful transformation.

Hannibal's lips curved into a smile at the thought. Will wouldn't actually *have* any will of his own by the time their relationship reached its inevitable conclusion. He would be more than willing to sacrifice his life to Hannibal's will; he would be proud to do so.

That would be the ultimate victory; to take Will over so completely that he would willingly die simply because his master told him that it had to be. To control someone else's will like that -- especially someone with as strong a will as Will Graham -- now *that* was power.

He would wield that power. Eventually.

Today would only be the first small step along the path to having that power, that control over another human being's life. It would be a most interesting venture, the fight for Will Graham's soul. But it would be a game that he would eventually win.

Hannibal rose to his feet as another knock came to his ears, this one stronger and less hesitant than the first. It seemed that Will had made up his mind.

Yes, he was taking his future -- and his very life -- into his own hands, just as Hannibal wanted him to. A life that would soon be manipulated and controlled. Hannibal couldn't repress a smile as he headed for the door, ready to open it and admit Will inside.

The game had begun.

What You Want

Chapter Summary

Will may not be entirely sure of what he wants -- but Hannibal is.

Will swallowed hard, raising his hand to knock at the door again. Before he could do so, it was pulled open, and Hannibal was standing there in front of him, wearing pajamas and a long robe. Will could do nothing but stare; all of his words seemed to have lodged in his throat.

He couldn't think of anything to say, couldn't come up with a single reason why he was here. There were so many, but none of them seemed to make sense at the moment.

Fortunately, Hannibal didn't seem to need a reason.

"Ah, Will," he said softly, moving back and opening the door wider. "Come in. I was expecting you." His smile seemed genuine, but Will could sense that there was something more behind it than mere friendliness. a shadow that lurked in the background.

"You were expecting me?" He hesitated on the doorstep, suddenly unwilling to enter the house. If he did, then there would be no turning back; he would *have* to go down the path he'd started on, and he wouldn't be able to change his mind once that door closed behind him.

He didn't want to change his mind, a voice in his head argued. He was taking this step with his eyes wide open, knowing that it could not only cost him Hannibal's friendship, but also his help with the cases he'd been assisting with. Will was putting it all on the line for a personal desire.

He wasn't usually this unprofessional. But something was driving him to this, something deep within himself that he couldn't control.

But he still couldn't make himself cross that threshold.

Why was he hesitating? This was idiotic, he told himself firmly. He'd come here to tell Hannibal how he felt, regardless of the consequences of that confession. It was ridiculous to stand here on the doorstep, drawing out the moment when he'd have to say those words.

Taking a deep breath, he took one step forward, then another -- and heard the door close behind him and the lock click into place. He swallowed again, his mouth suddenly dry. Why had that click sounded like a loaded gun being cocked, primed and ready to fire?

Will blinked, trying to collect his thoughts. Now that he was here, he had to find some way of leading up to telling Hannibal how he felt, and that wasn't going to be easy. He couldn't just

blurt it out; that would be too sudden, too surprising. He had to work up to it.

Walking like an automaton, he followed Hannibal to the kitchen, sitting down at the table across from him. He looked around, taking in the sight of two coffee mugs on the counter next to the steaming pot of coffee; it *did* seem as though Hannibal had been expecting him.

How could that be? He hadn't even known that he would be here until only a short while ago. Could Hannibal somehow see into his thoughts?

No, that was impossible. He was letting his nervousness get the better of him.

"Coffee?" Hannibal asked, going to the coffeepot and pouring one mug, then another, even though Will hadn't answered him. They'd shared coffee many times before; he knew how Will liked his coffee, just as he knew so many other things that Will struggled to keep hidden.

Could he already *know* how Will felt? The thought drove Will to his feet; he couldn't sit here and pretend that he didn't have anything to say, that something of the utmost importance hadn't drive him here at this hour of the morning.

He could feel Hannibal behind him, closer than he'd expected the other man to be. He didn't dare turn around; he couldn't face the object of his desire, not now, not before he knew what he wanted to say, how to phrase the words in the way that he wanted them to sound.

"I know what you want, Will."

Will's head jerked up, his eyes widening? Was that true? *Did* Hannibal know what he wanted, why he was here? Had the other man divined his feelings without being told?

Will felt Hannibal's fingers stroke across his cheek; he closed his eyes, wanting desperately to lean into that touch. Maybe this was wrong, but it didn't *feel* wrong. It felt like exactly what he wanted -- Hannibal's touch, Hannibal's closeness.

He could feel Hannibal's breath, hot against his throat, feel those cool fingertips on his skin. Slowly, Will turned to face Hannibal, realizing as soon as he saw the other man's expression that he didn't need to explain what he wanted -- or how he felt.

Somehow, Hannibal *knew*. Maybe he had always known, before Will had grasped the meaning behind his own feelings. Hannibal had gotten there first.

There were no secrets now. There was nothing standing in his way.

But Will couldn't make himself move. All he could do was stand there, frozen, immobile, so close that he could lean slightly forward and brush his lips across Hannibal's. He wanted to do that; more than anything, he wanted to kiss this man.

But he couldn't make himself move, couldn't force himself to take that last step, the one that would seal his fate and make it impossible to even think of moving back instead of forward. He felt as though he was in stasis, frozen in time, unable to move a muscle.

He had to make a decision, and he had to make it quickly, before the man in front of him grew tired of waiting, and the chance was gone forever.

He didn't expect that decision to be taken out of his own hands.

Will didn't know exactly how it had happened, but suddenly, Hannibal's mouth was on his, their lips meeting. Hannibal's lips were soft, yet demanding; Will could feel his own lips parting helplessly, of their own volition, to allow Hannibal's questing tongue into his mouth.

Hannibal's arm was around his waist, holding him in place, drawing him closer; he couldn't have pulled away even if he'd wanted to. The other man was leisurely tasting his mouth, exploring, taking his time, as though Will was a country to be explored and conquered.

Then Hannibal's hands were on his jaw, cupping his face; it was as though Hannibal was *drinking* from his mouth, inhaling his very essence. Will could feel his knees going weak; in another few seconds, he would either have to sit down, or collapse into Hannibal's arms.

Will felt weak, disoriented, confused. What was he doing here?

Kissing Hannibal, that's what he was doing. Or, rather, Hannibal was kissing *him*. This was what he'd wanted; this was why he was here.

When they both broke away from the kiss, Will could only stand there, staring at Hannibal. They had gone too far now to back away; he was committed to moving forward, to finding out just what was in store for him, no matter what the consequences might be.

He was terrified of what might happen. He didn't want to experience the emotional pain of giving himself to a man who might not want him for more than a brief time; he couldn't open himself up to that kind of pain .It would always be there; it would stay with him for a lifetime.

But that was exactly what he was going to do. He already knew it.

Maybe that pain was inevitable. Maybe he would, eventually, regret what he was doing. But he couldn't stop himself; it had all gone past the point of no return. This was what he wanted, and if he tried to turn away from it now, then he would hate himself forever.

He couldn't face Hannibal's eyes; that gaze was far too intense. He turned around, taking one deep breath, then another. Was he doing the right thing? Or was he insane to even be here? He no longer knew whether this was right or wrong; his world was crumbling around him.

All he knew was that he wanted. That he *needed*.

"I know what you want, Will." Hannibal's voice was soft, quiet. "And I'll give it to you. All you have to do is ask. Nothing more than that, and you'll have all that you need."

He wanted to believe those words, *had* to believe them. He had no choice; he was already caught up in a web that he might never be able to escape from, one of his own making. He had reached out to entangle himself in those sticky threads; and now, he couldn't break free.

Will closed his eyes, the one word he needed to say slipping from his lips.

"Please."

Melting in the Sun

Chapter Summary

It's far too late for Will to turn back now, even if he wanted to.

Will closed his eyes, wondering what would come next. He should never have turned away from Hannibal; with his back turned, he couldn't see into those eyes, couldn't figure out just what the enigmatic man standing behind him might do next.

But he never knew what was in Hannibal's mind, did he?

It was easy enough for Hannibal to delve into *his* mind; he did that on an almost daily basis now. But Will had never really been granted entry into his.

Why was that? Did Hannibal have something to hide? Was there some reason that he always kept his emotions hidden, or was that just something he did without realizing it? Will didn't know what to think; even now, when they might be intimate, Hannibal showed no emotion.

Was he really that cold, or was it just an act that he was putting on, a front that he kept up to hide himself away from the world? Will desperately wanted to break down that reserve, to find out what made Hannibal tick. He wanted to know everything about this man.

He didn't stop to think that knowing everything could be extremely dangerous.

Will could feel Hannibal close behind him; the warmth of the other man's body seemed to seep into his, even though only a few moments before, when he'd first come into the house, he'd felt thoroughly chilled. Amazing what the nearness of someone he desired could do to him.

Maybe this was wrong. Maybe he would regret it later, but he wasn't going to hold back his desires any more. He couldn't. If he did, then he would drive himself with wanting -- and those desires might come out in a way that he didn't want anyone to see.

From what he could tell, Hannibal wanted him just as much, but he shouldn't judge the other man's feelings by just one kiss. He had tasted desire in that kiss, but he couldn't be sure if that was only because he wanted this so badly, or because it was actually there.

What did Hannibal feel for him? Was he brave enough to ask, point-blank, in so many words? Or did he have to continually dance around the subject?

He didn't want to keep dancing. He wanted to *know*, here and now, in no uncertain terms. He needed to know if this was just a game that Hannibal was playing, or if he was serious about a seduction -- because he could feel himself being seduce, slowly and thoroughly.

Not only seduce. He was being captured, held prisoner by his own desire.

And he *liked* it. He didn't want this seduction to stop.

"I know what you want, Will." Hannibal's voice was a sibilant whisper in the grey dawn of early morning, the sound bouncing off the walls of the kitchen just as the sunlight would when it began to shine through the windowpane. "Are you brave enough to ask for what you need?"

Will didn't want to answer that question; he wasn't sure if he could. The one word he'd been able to speak felt as though it had left his lips hours ago; it seemed impossible that it had only been uttered within the last few moments, a word of promise and surrender.

But he knew that he had to say that word again, to confirm Hannibal's question and let the other man know that he did indeed want this. Wherever these moments might lead, he had stepped onto a path that enclosed him, one that he couldn't turn away from.

Will nodded, then spoke, the single word trembling on his lips. "Yes."

Then, with a suddenness that was almost shocking, he felt Hannibal's hands unbuttoning his shirt, making quick work of it, those cool, smooth hands sliding down his chest to his belly. Touching him in a way that no one else he'd been with ever had.

Will closed his eyes, surrendering himself to that touch. He never wanted anyone else to touch him. Not after this. He wanted this touch to be etched on his body and soul forever.

This was how he'd always dreamed of being touched, a caress that made him feel as though his body was melting in the sun, the heat of Hannibal's body and the coolness of his hands combing to reduce him to nothing more than pure *sensation*.

He gave himself over to that pleasure, letting all of his defenses fall away.

Another moment, and those hands were unzipping his jeans, then pushing them down his hips to pool around his ankles, leaving him bare from the waist down. He felt no shame, no urge to cover himself; he only wanted more of that touch, the touch that was reducing him to ashes.

Then Hannibal's hand was on his cock, cool fingers curling around his erection; he could feel Hannibal's own erection pressed against his ass, hard, insistent.

It didn't matter that he was half-naked and Hannibal was still fully clothed. Will had never felt so vulnerable in his life, as though he was putty in Hannibal's hands. At this moment, he knew that he would let the other man do whatever he wanted, no matter what it might be.

He would offer himself to Hannibal like a lamb to the slaughter.

The hand on his cock was drawing an involuntary response from not only his body, but his mind as well; his hips jerked forward, as though he was trying to get even closer to the man who held him. Hannibal's fingers tightened around him, then began to stroke.

A soft groan broke from Will's lips, his head falling back onto Hannibal's shoulder. If the other man hadn't had one arm around his waist, he was sure that he would have crumpled to the floor; his legs were like water, unable to hold him up on their own.

Hannibal's thumb was swirling over the tip of his penis, then those cool fingers slid down to the base, each languid stroke clasping him tightly, then releasing. His body was tightening, his senses spiraling; it would only be a matter of moments before he reached a climax.

"Do you need more, Will?" Hannibal breathed into his ear. "Do you want more of me? Do you want me inside you? All you need do is ask, and you'll have what you need."

He didn't want to say that one word. It would bring the world down around him.

But he *had* to say it. He couldn't hold the word back; it rose to his lips unbidden, even though Will wasn't at all sure that was what he wanted. It would change everything; his relationship with Hannibal would cross a line that there was no coming back from.

Even as that thought rose to the forefront of his mind, his orgasm broke over him like a crashing wave, his body trembling in Hannibal's arms. He felt dizzy, disoriented, not sure whether he was still standing on his own, or if Hannibal was all that was holding him up.

He was melting in the sun, and he wasn't sure that he would ever be able to put all the pieces of himself that seemed to be falling at his feet back together again. He was undone, unhinged, falling apart in a way that he'd never thought one single person would ever have the power to make him feel.

He was caught in a trap that he didn't want to be freed from.

"What do you want, Will?" Hannibal's voice was soft, insinuating. "Tell me, or the moment will pass. And we may not be able to go back to it again."

The suddenness of his orgasm had taken Will by surprised; he blinked, opening his eyes and trying to focus. He barely heard Hannibal's words at first, until they coalesced inside his head and he realized that he had to say something, that he couldn't remain silent.

He *had* to speak. If he kept hesitating, he might never get what he needed.

Will took a deep breath, closing his eyes and forcing the words out. "I want you inside me," he rasped, his tongue feeling oddly hesitant, as though it wanted to hold the words back, rather than get them out in the open. *"Please."*

There it was again, the one word that he knew Hannibal wanted to hear. The one word that he knew he shouldn't say, the word that would reduce him to a pleading mess and give the other man the upper hand. The word that was so hard to bring into reality.

He hated to beg. But that was what he'd been reduced to -- and he knew that if he was forced to do so, he would get down on his knees and plead with Hannibal to take him. He was past the point of no return, and now, his fate was sealed. There was no going back.

"Please," he whispered again. "Please. I need you."

He was in Hannibal's hands now, for better or for worse.

Surrender To the Devil

Chapter Summary

This is only the first time he'll surrender all that he is.

Will swallowed hard, wishing that he hadn't said those words. There was no turning back now, and he wasn't sure that he was ready for what he'd just asked Hannibal to do. If only he could take the words back, swallow them whole, pretend that they hadn't been uttered.

But it was far too late now. There was no do-over.

He had no choice but to surrender to this man; it was what he wanted, really, even if it was frightening at the same time. He had dreamed of this moment, dreamed of giving himself to Hannibal, dreamed of the freedom he would feel, the culmination of so many desires.

This was a dream come true for him. It had to be. There was no other way to describe it. This was what he had wanted for so long, and now it was happening.

But if it was a dream come true, then why did it feel like a nightmare?

This wasn't the way he'd wanted to come together for the first time .Not with him half-lying on a kitchen counter, his jeans around his ankles, with Hannibal standing behind him, still fully clothed, his hands playing Will's body like a violin.

He was surrendering to Hannibal in every way, giving himself completely, Will told himself. This was how it should be, how it *had* to be if he wanted any kind of an honest relationship with this man. Hannibal would expect nothing less from him.

The man he'd chosen as his lover would demand everything from him, and he was willing to give it. He'd made that decision before he came here today. He had gone over what he had to do in his mind so many times that he knew neither of them would settle for less than total surrender.

Hannibal deserved that from him. If he was going to give himself, body and soul, then he couldn't do it by halves. It was all or nothing.

That was what Hannibal expected. But was it really what he expected of himself?

Of course it was, Will told himself fiercely. He couldn't go into any relationship and hold even a small part of himself back; he wasn't the sort of person who made any kind of commitment lightly. He'd always been like that -- and he had usually leaped before he looked.

He hadn't done that this time. He'd examined every angle, though of every possibility. And this was still what he wanted. He *had* to surrender himself completely, give over everything that he was, or he didn't deserve to have all of his desires fulfilled.

He had come here today knowing exactly what would be expected of him, and what he would do. He'd had his eyes wide open, knowing what he was getting himself into.

Or did he?

"There will be some pain," Hannibal whispered into his ear, pulling him out of his thoughts and back into the present moment. With a shock, he realized that the other man was now naked, the tip of his penis pressing against Will's bottom, hot and *hard*.

For one searing moment, he almost broke away, all of his senses on the alert. He had the feeling that he was taking his life into his own hands, forcing himself to surrender to the devil, baring his throat for a knife that would slice into his flesh when he least expected it.

But the moment passed; Will forced his muscles to relax, though he tensed again when he felt Hannibal's breath warm against his throat. His surrender was inevitable, but his body wasn't going to simply capitulate and make this easier for him.

"I know," he answered, nodding, trying to exude some semblance of calm acceptance even as his hands gripped the edge of the counter so hard that his knuckles were white.

He tensed even more when Hannibal reached for a small jar of olive oil on the counter; he obviously intended for it to be used as lube, and though Will had no objection to that, it still reminded him all too vividly of the pain that would come in just a few moments.

Maybe it wouldn't be that bad. Hannibal wouldn't deliberately hurt him. Would he?

Will gasped when he felt Hannibal's fingers spreading him; even as much as he thought he wanted this, the first time being with another man felt strange, as though he was stepping outside of himself, outside of some boundaries he didn't even know that he'd set.

But those boundaries were slipping away, the pleasure of being touched by a man he'd wanted for what felt like forever stripping them away. He could think of nothing but that touch, how much he wanted and needed it, how much he wanted to sink into it.

Hannibal's warm, oiled fingers stroked over his entrance, making his muscles tighten, then relax. Will could feel himself opening, his body alternately relaxing and tensing, waiting for the moment when those fingers would push inside him and break down another boundary.

When they did, he could only gasp again, his body arching into that touch. The pleasure was indescribable; it almost felt as though his body was melting into Hannibal's touch, letting the other man become a part of him, inviting Hannibal to take all that he wanted.

If this was what complete and utter surrender was like, then he was more than willing to give himself over, no matter what the consequences might be.

This was all that he'd expected, and so much more.

Within seconds, his hips were rocking back against Hannibal's fingers, his body demanding more than his mind was ready for at the moment. It was as if he had no control over his movements; he had surrendered to Hannibal's touch utterly and completely.

He hadn't expected this, hadn't expected it to feel this good, this *right*. But still, that little voice kept whispering insinuations into his ear, telling him that he was surrendering to the devil, giving himself over to a darkness that would eventually eat away at him.

Will pushed that voice out of his head, concentrating on what he felt. Now that he had finally leapt that abyss and placed himself in Hannibal's hands, there was no turning back. He could only look at the path that was laid out ahead of him, leaving everything else behind.

No, it wasn't safe. No, it wasn't what he'd planned. But he was here, and the only thing he could do was live in the moment, forge ahead, and surrender himself to his destiny.

"Are you ready for this?" Hannibal asked, his voice soft in Will's ear.

He might as well have screamed the words; Will wasn't quite sure how to answer the question. A part of him wanted this more than he'd ever wanted anything in his life, but a part of him was cringing, terrified of how it would feel, and what this final surrender would mean.

Once he'd crossed this line, he would belong to Hannibal. There was no doubt about that; he would have given not only his body to this man, but his soul as well. Yet, there was only one answer he could give, one word that he could say. There was no turning back.

"Yes," he whispered, closing his eyes and surrendering all that he was.

Exquisite

Chapter Summary

At long last, Hannibal will be able to sate his desire for Will -- and this is only the first time.

Exquisite. That was the only word to describe Will Graham. He was *exquisite*.

Hannibal closed his eyes, breathing in the scent of Will's arousal -- and his fear. Mingled with the scents of their colognes, it was a heady fragrance, the desire only slightly overriding the fear that Will probably didn't yet realize he was feeling.

But he would, Hannibal thought with an inward smile. Oh, he would. Before this was all over, Will Graham would realize what real fear was.

And Hannibal would enjoy feeding on that fear.

It might be far into the future before he could make Will feel that fear, but it would happen. And he would revel in that fear, Hannibal thought as he ran a hand down Will's back and felt the young man shudder under his touch. That fear was as necessary to him as breathing.

Will might not be aware of his fear yet, but it was there, in the back of his mind, just waiting to make its appearance. And Hannibal knew just how to draw that fear out when he was ready for Will to feel it, keeping it hidden until the moment of unveiling.

That moment would show will Will just what he was meant for, what his destiny had to be.

He was hugry for that moment, wishing that it was already here, even though it was far too early in this budding relationship to think in those terms yet.

He was hungry for the fear, for the need, for the moment of the kill.

Ah, but there was plenty of time for that, Hannibal told himself as he moved one hand down Will's back to calm him. Will had already admitted to his need; drawing out his desire was only the beginning. There was so much yet to come before the final act.

He would take Will Graham to a very dark place indeed, a place that he would never be able to escape from. By the time he breathed his last, this young man would be so caught up in that darkness that he would welcome the final oblivion.

That final surrender would be just as exquisite as this first one was.

Will's fear was as satisfying as his desire, in a different way. And Hannibal had no doubt that he would spend a great deal of time savoring them both.

He'd waited for this moment for what felt like a lifetime, the moment when he would be able to make Will his. After this, he and Will would be joined, no matter what Will might feel in the future.

His hips stilled as he took a deep breath, preparing to thrust forward into bliss.

He was more than ready to sate his hunger.

Walk the Knife

Chapter Summary

Will's first time with Hannibal is like walking along the edge of a knife, not knowing when he'll fall off into oblivion.

Will closed his eyes, clutching the edge of the counter and holding his breath. Only a few more seconds now; then he would finally have what he'd wanted for so long, what he'd dreamed about and taunted himself with for what felt like a lifetime.

"Are you ready?" Hannibal whispered into his ear, his warm breath tickling the short hairs on the back of Will's neck, his hands resting on Will's hips.

Will could only nod, swallowing hard, not sure if he was ready or not.

Then a searing pain tore through him, taking his breath away, as though a fire had scorched his lungs and left him unable to breathe for a few moments. Will gasped, trying to force himself to relax, knowing that the pain would only be worse if he was tense.

It *hurt*.

He hadn't expected this kind of pain, hadn't expected it to be prolonged. He'd thought that it would only hurt for a few seconds, a moment in time, like a flash of quicksilver through his body. He hadn't expected the pain to linger, and then to grow worse with the second thrust.

Will gritted his teeth, holding onto the counter as though it was the only thing that kept him from crumpling to the ground. In truth, he thought it probably was.

Hannibal's hands were still on his hips, holding him steady as the other man thrust into him over and over again -- and after the first few moments, Will could feel himself opening, the pain turning into pleasure, a white-hot desire coursing through his veins.

Without realizing it, his hips were pushing back against Hannibal, silently asking for more.

One of Hannibal's hands moved up his body, to his chest, then to his throat -- to finally clamp over his mouth, as though Hannibal didn't want him to cry out. Will didn't struggle against him; he didn't have the strength for anything other than clutching the counter.

He was caught somewhere between pleasure and pain, each thrust seeming to knife through his body, every movement pushing him closer to release.

He felt as though he walked along the edge of a knife, balancing precariously between an exquisite pleasure and an excruciating pain, not sure which side he would eventually fall into.

But whichever it was, he was willing to embrace either of them with equal fervor.

Hannibal's hand pressed firmly over his mouth as the other man thrust into him again -- and this time, Will couldn't hold back a scream. The hand muffled his cry, pressing over his mouth harder; it was obvious that Hannibal didn't want the sound to be heard.

Then the hand was gone from his mouth, moving down his side, and Hannibal's movements had stopped. He was as still as a statue, poised, waiting.

The only sound in the room was their harsh panting.

"Try to relax," Hannibal said softly, one hand stroking iIll's side. "Let yourself melt into it, Will. Don't think. Just *feel*." With those words, he thrust forward again, slowly this time, as though he wanted Will to feel every movement as he was slowly filled.

This time, the thrust didn't hurt. There was only pure pleasure; the intensity of the pain that had gone before had given way to a bliss that seemed to permeate his very bones, to sink into him and envelop him from his head to his toes. It was heady, breathtaking.

He never wanted this to end; he wanted the two of them to stay locked in this primal embrace forever, for this pleasure to go on and on into infinity.

Of course, that couldn't happen, but he could always dream, couldn't he?

Nothing had ever felt this good, this *right*. He had been right to want this; for the first time in his life, he felt as though he was truly *connected* to another person, even though there were still walls between himself and Hannibal that hadn't been breached.

They were on their way to breaking down those walls; this was proof of it. Knowing and understanding the other man fully might take some time, but this proved to Will that he had made the right decision when he had taken that first step forward into Hannibal's world.

Another thrust, and Will gasped, feeling as though he was lifted into the clouds. His body was tightening in response; only a few moments more, and he would spiral downward from those dizzying heights into a pool of pleasure that it would be difficult to climb out of again.

He wanted this pleasure to last, to keep lifting hm higher, but it would inevitably end. That end was coming much faster than he wanted it to.

Another thrust, then another -- and his orgasm broke over him in one crashing wave.

This time, he couldn't hold back his cry; it seemed to reverberate off the walls, to echo around them. And he could hear Hannibal's groan as the other man reached his climax at the same time, spilling into him, his arms locked around Will's waist.

He could feel Hannibal's breath warm against the back of his neck, feel his lover's spasms as the aftershocks of their orgasms slowly faded away. He felt boneless, watery; he was sure that if Hannibal wasn't holding him up, he would have slithered to the floor and sprawled there.

Will didn't want Hannibal to pull out of him; now that the pain was past, he felt comfortable with the other man being inside him, with their bodies being locked together. But he knew that withdrawal was inevitable as well; they couldn't stay like this forever.

He wondered how long he would walk the knife, poised on the edge of desire and all the while knowing that this had to come to an end.

Now that he'd discovered what being intimate with Hannibal was like, he wanted to hold on to this feeling as long as he could. He wanted to walk the knife for the rest of his days, to revel in the feeling of finally having connected with the person he'd hungered for.

He only hoped that Hannibal felt the same.

If he didn't, then this would only be a brief pleasure, one that he would have to savor every second of so that he would be able to look back on it for the rest of his life. He knew that once this ended, he would never be able to feel this way again with anyone else.

He couldn't hold back a sigh of regret as Hannibal slid out of him, the warmth of his body moving away. Will suddenly felt bereft, cold and exposed.

"Are you all right?" Hannibal asked, his voice soft. Suddenly he was behind Will again, that breath soft and warm on his skin yet again. "I didn't mean to be quite so .... rough." His voice sent a shiver down Will's spine; it was hard to believe that they'd been so intimate only moments before.

Will nodded, trying desperately to find his voice. "Yeah, I'm fine. I'm great," he added, turning his head to look at the other man. Hannibal's lips were curved in a strange little smile, as though he understood every thought that was going through Will's mind.

Maybe he did. Hannibal was the most intuitive person he'd ever known.

Silently, he let Hannibal pull his jeans back up; he fumbled with the button and zipper, feeling more than a little lost for words. He had no words; he felt empty of all thought, all capability of conversation.

He still desperately wanted to *feel*. The taste he'd had of Hannibal hadn't been enough; he needed more. He wasn't even sure if Hannibal realized that what they'd just done had been the first time he'd ever been intimate with a man; they'd never talked about that.

"That was only the first time, Will," Hannibal breathed into his ear, his hands stroking down Will's sides, making him shiver with pleasure. "There will be many, many more times in the future, if that' what you want. It's certainly what *I* want."

Will could only gulp and nod, unable to speak for a few moments.

"Yes," he finally whispered, his voice hoarse. "I want." The knowledge that he would walk the knife again leaped within him, like a rush of adrenaline that he couldn't hold back.

Black Burning Heart

Chapter Summary

> Will can't put a name to what he feels for Hannibal, but he knows that it's much more than simple lust.

Three days.

It had been three days since that morning in Hannibal's house, three days since he'd even talked to the man who he supposed was now his lover, much less laid eyes on him. Will simply didn't know what to say or how to behave the next tiem they saw each other.

He knew what he *wanted* to say, but given that Hannibal hadn't tried to get in touch with him, even when he'd missed an appointment yesterday, he had no idea what the other man would think about what he had to say when they were finally face to face again.

Will sighed softly, leaning forward in his chair and wincing. Even though it had been three days, he could swear that he still felt sore from their lovemaking.

Lovemaking? Could it possibly be called that? It hadn't like love; it had felt like a slaking of mutual lust, and that was what he needed to talk to Hannibal about. He wanted what they'd done to be more than just physical; he wanted the physical to lead to something more.

Was he crazy to have such strong feelings for Hannibal?

After all, it wasn't as though Hannibal had shown those same feelings towards him. He really couldn't even say that they were friends; they were colleagues, in some ways, but if it was a friendship, it was an uneasy one at best. At worst, they were mere acquaintances.

No, they were more than that, Will told himself firmly. Hannibal knew more about him than anyone else had in a very long time, even though he wasn't technically a patient.

Maybe he couldn't call what was between them by such a word as "love," and maybe he couldn't really say that the two of them were merely friends. They were somewhere in between friends and lovers, in an awkward, uncomfortable situation that he had no words for.

What would Hannibal think of it? They needed to talk; if they didn't, then there would be a huge elephant in the room every time they met, and things would only get more uncomfortable from there. They had to clear the air, to know just what their situation was.

Hannibal would probably say it was lust. Just lust, nothing more than that.

But *was* it more? Will asked himself, a frown marring his brow. To him, it was. He couldn't say that he was in love with Hannibal, but there was definitely some unnamed emotion hovering just beneath the surface of their strained, strange relationship.

All right, so maybe it wasn't love. But it was some emotion that came from the depths of his heart, a burning, searing emotion that was eating him from the inside out.

He couldn't put a name to what he felt, and he didn't really want to. It was too soon for that, too early in this odd relationship to face whatever emotion it was that slowly swam to the surface of his consciousness. But whatever it was, he'd have to face it at some point.

This wasn't the time. For the moment, he had to reconcile what they'd done with the rest of his life, and find out if there was any reason to hope that it would happen again. And again, and again ... .as many times as they both wanted it to happen.

Will's breath caught in his throat at the thought of Hannibal touching him so intimately again.

Not just touching him -- but *fucking* him. That's what it had been; fucking on a pure and simple level, the two of them assuaging needs that had coincided and collided with a force that neither of them had known they would. It had been appetite, and opportunity.

No, Will thought, shaking his head. It had been more than that. There were emotions buried inside him that he wasn't ready to acknowledge yet; somewhere deep in that black lump of coal that he thought of as his heart, there was something stirring that he couldn't put a name to.

Was it love? Or was it merely desire and nothing more? He didn't want to ask himself that question yet; he wasn't ready to come up with an answer.

But somewhere in that black burning heart that beat within his chest, he already knew the answer. He just didn't want to let himself put those emotions into words, to let himself admit that what he felt was more than just a desire that would eventually burn out and fade away.

He didn't know how long whatever he and Hannibal were developing between them would last. Maybe it would fade away quickly once they had assuaged their mutual lust for each other enough times; maybe slaking that lust would make it die a quick death.

He didn't know that for sure. But one thing he *did* know was that he wanted more of Hannibal. He hadn't had nearly enough of the man he had desired for so long.

He *needed* Hannibal. Needed his touch, his hands, his lips, his body.

Will closed his eyes, heaving a sigh of resignation. He would have to see Hannibal again as soon as he could. He had deliberately skipped one of their "appointments," not sure what he was going to say to the other man But he couldn't do that again.

If he had the audacity to skip another of their impromptu psychiatric sessions, then Hannibal might not want to see him in that way any more. And he *needed* those sessions; he needed the insight that Hannibal seemed to have into his psyche.

With all of his ability to see into criminals' minds, he had a hard time seeing into his own. For that, he needed Hannibal. He couldn't give up that lifeline into his soul.

If he didn't have Hannibal in his life to force him to shine a light into those dark corners of his own mind, then it would be far too easy for him to fall into the minds of criminals, even easier than it already was. And he knew that he could just as easily get lost in the depths of those minds.

Once he allowed that to happen, he might never get out again.

He couldn't risk that, Will told himself, feeling shaky and panicked. He couldn't risk going so deeply into the darkness that he was somehow able to touch that he lost himself in it; that wasn't a way that he wanted to go. The very thought was terrifying.

Without Hannibal, it might be all too easy for that to happen. He didn't want to think that it was possible, but he knew all too well that it was, and he also knew that if it did, that tiny spark of hope concealed in his black burning heart, the hope of being with Hannibal, would be extinguished.

He wasn't yet ready to give up that hope, impossible though it might be that it could come true. He couldn't let that spark die, not as long as he had life left in him.

So maybe it wasn't the best idea to think that he and Hannibal could have a future together. But everyone had to dream, didn't they? And if his dreams might seem a little odd to some people .... well, no one had ever accused him of being a completely normal guy.

Would it be wrong of him to see Hannibal now? Will chewed at his bottom lip as he looked up at the clock on the wall; it wasn't all that late, and it wasn't like he hadn't turned up on Hannibal's doorstep at night before. But he'd always called first, let the doctor know that he was coming over.

This time, he wasn't going to call. He was going to go to Hannibal's house, and they were going to talk. He'd pour out his soul, if he had to.

He had to let all the secrets held inside his black burning heart out into the open.

If he didn't do it now, then he might either talk himself out of it, or lose his nerve. Standing up, Will headed for the front door, grabbing his jacket on the way out. He had the feeling that he wouldn't be back home tonight -- and he hoped that he would wake up in a bed other than his own.

Walking on Broken Glass

Chapter Summary

Will has a horrific nightmare that only strengthens his need to see Hannibal again.

Hannibal's house. He had to get to Hannibal's house.

It was hard to lift his feet, hard to take each step. It felt as though a million bees were swarming around his feet, stinging them, making each step forward painful to take. But Will kept doggedly on, focusing on his goal, on where he had to be.

He had to get to Hannibal. That was where he belonged, where he wanted to be. He wasn't going to stop until he was there, knocking on the front door.

Each step he took felt like walking on broken glass; it was extraordinarily painful to lift his feet, to put one of them in front of the other over and over again. Why was it so hard to walk? Was it because a part of him wasn't entirely sure that he should be doing this?

It didn't matter how hard it might be to get there; he knew where he was going, and he wouldn't turn back. He had made up his mind; he would see this through, no matter how awkward it might be to see Hannibal again. He had to do this, for his own peace of mind.

Still, it shouldn't be so hard. He should be able to walk faster than this.

Just taking each step was excruciating. Will gasped as he put one foot down, feeling pain shoot up his leg. Why did it hurt this badly? What was wrong with his legs? Did he suddenly have some debilitating disease that made it nearly impossible to walk?

He didn't want to look down, but he had to. The pain was getting worse with each step, and he had to know why, no matter how horrifying it might be.

Will looked down -- and screamed at the sight.

All around him were shards of broken glass, everywhere he looked. He had no idea how long he had been walking on them, but they had reduced his feet to a torn, bloody mess. He didn't need to look behind him to know that there was a trail of blood in his wake.

Even as he stared down at the bloody mass that his feet had become, he took another step forward and lost his balance; he was falling towards those shards of glass, their edges gleaming in the moonlight as they seemed to welcome his flesh amongst them.

All he could do was scream and put out his hands in front of him to break his fall.

The ground was rushing up at him; he knew that those shards cutting into his skin would be far more painful than the jarring fall could ever be. He closed his eyes, squeezing them tightly shut to try to ward off the explosion of pain that he knew was coming, even as another scream left his lips.

He could swear that death was all around him, a hideous, messy, bloody death, breathing down his neck, looking over his shoulder, smiling complacently as it observed.

Will screamed again; it was the only thing he could do.

..... In the next split second, he was sitting up in bed, one hand against his racing heart, gulping for air; he was looking around at the safety of his bedroom, his eyes wide. He wasn't alone in a sea of broken glass. He was at home, in bed. He was safe.

Will ran a hand over his face, through his hair, trying to convince himself that it had only been a dream. It still felt *real*, terrifyingly so. He was afraid to look at his feet, afraid that they would be bloody shreds, the flesh hanging from them in strips.

But when he kicked back the covers and stared down his legs to his feet, they looked normal. There was no blood, no pain. He had dreamed it. All of it. Nothing had happened.

None of it was real. He flopped back down onto the pillow, taking one deep breath, then another. For once, he hadn't been sleepwalking. He'd just had a particularly horrifying dream, one that would probably stay with him for a while. He wasn't a bloody, broken mess.

But he still felt an insatiable need to go to Hannibal.

Will knew that he wouldn't be able to resist that need for long -- even if he had to crawl over broken glass to get there. His need for Hannibal called him like a siren song that he couldn't resist; sooner or later, he would be drawn to the other man, no matter how he might try to resist.

Hannibal dew him like a moth to a flame. He didn't know why, and he didn't know how much longer he could resist that temptation.

It was useless to try, really. And if he was now literally walking on broken glass even in his dreams to get to Hannibal, then there was probably no use in resisting. After all, what harm could it do to see the other man? They had a lot to talk about.

If they didn't address the elephant in the room, then it would always be there. He wouldn't be able to continue working with Hannibal in a professional capacity, much less the personal relationship they'd developed as doctor and unofficial patient, if they didn't clear the air.

That had to be done soon, he thought with a soft sigh. The sooner the better.

He still wanted to resist the lure of that siren song, but he knew that it was useless. Sooner or later, he was going to find himself in that same situation he'd been in the first time he and Hannibal had been together. He might as well accept it.

And he might as well accept the fact that he *wanted* that to happen, even if he somehow felt that this relationship could be dangerous for him. He wanted to be with Hannibal again more than he'd ever wanted anything in his life. It was worth any risk he had to take.

Maybe it was crazy. And maybe he would regret it. But he had to talk to Hannibal, to find out exactly where this was heading, and if they had a future.

Sighing again, he got out of bed, standing up cautiously and reaching for his cell phone.

Within moments, he had left a message on Hannibal's voice mail, requesting an appointment. He knew that Hannibal would get back to him, and that they would be meeting and talking soon. Just the thought of seeing the other man again made him quiver with desire.

Would the same thing happen again, or would it be different this time? Will didn't know which of those options he would prefer, but he knew that *something* would happen between them. It was inevitable, a foregone conclusion. It was something to look forward to.

He would walk over broken glass to be in Hannibal's arms again.

Shades of Desire

Chapter Summary

There are many different shades to a palette; Hannibal decides to explore a few of them.

Hannibal looked across his desk at Will with raised brows, studying the young man intently. "Why the sudden need to see me? You've skipped one appointment without a word, Will. I thought you were pulling away from me after what happened between us."

His voice was exactly right, striking a point between hurt and curiosity. Just the way he wanted it to sound, the way that would bring out Will's feelings.

Just as he expected, Will blushed and didn't look up at him. He was slouched in one of the chairs in front of Hannibal's desk; even though it was after ten o'clock at night, he hadn't taken the opportunity to lie down and stretch out on the comfortable couch.

But he would. Hannibal would make sure of that.

"Would you like a drink?" he asked, the question rhetorical. He intended to give Will a drink whether he said yes or not -- and that would set his plan for the evening into motion, though Will would be unaware of it. As well he should be. Will didn't need to know everything.

In fact, he knew very little about what Hannibal had planned for him. He might be unnerved when he saw the first unveiling of that plan, but he would come to accept it. After all, it was his destiny, whether he knew that yet or not -- and whether or not he wanted it to be.

Will started to shake his head, then nodded, giving Hannibal a tired smile. "Yeah, I guess so," he murmured, sighing softly. "It's been a long day. I could use a drink."

Hannibal nodded, getting up from his chair and going to the bar. He deliberately kept his back turned to Will, surreptitiously sliding the twp sleeping pills out of the front pocket of his button-down shirt and dropping them into Will's drink, where they dissolved as though they'd never existed.

Phase one of his plan was completed, he thought with a slight smile.

Phase two would be a little more tricky, but he was sure that those pills would keep Will asleep for the entire night. That was what he planned, anyway -- and he was rarely ever wrong when it came to these sorts of things. He knew just how much of a dosage to give.

Will took the drink from him, drinking half of it in one gulp. Hannibal had to hide his satisfied smile behind his own drink; it would only take a few moments for Will to fall

asleep, and then he could proceed with his plan. It would be even easier to implement than he had thought.

All he would need was a few hours, if he worked quickly. And this would have an added bonus -- it would give Will a night of restful sleep, which he obviously needed, and make him even more grateful to Hannibal for letting him rest here.

He hadn't thought of that beforehand, but now that he did, it was brilliant.

Will probably wouldn't be pleased with what he saw when he first woke up and did a bit of investigating, but he would eventually come to realize that the surprise Hannibal would have for him was meant to be a compliment, regardless of the way in which it had been presented.

If he didn't, well, then he would have to be brought to see reason. That shouldn't be too hard, but Hannibal had the feeling that he wouldn't have to do so.

No, he was sure that Will would overcome his feelings of trepidation once his sensual side took over. It had happened once, and Hannibal had promised him a repeat performance. It wouldn't happen tonight, but anything could happen in the future. There were all sorts of possibilities.

Will didn't even realize that he was being manipulated, gently herded towards the place Hannibal wanted him to be in. It might take a while for him to be in the perfect position for what Hannibal had planned next, but he would get there. It would simply take a bit of finesse.

Hannibal couldn't help but smile again at the thought. Poor innocent Will, not knowing what was in store for him. This was going to be a pleasurable game indeed.

He glanced at Will again; the young man already seemed on the verge of passing out.

"I have a few things to get done before we can start our session," Hannibal told him, putting his own glass of wine down on the desk. "It should only take twenty minutes or so. Why don't you lie down and wait while I take care of it? I shouldn't be too long."

Will nodded, standing up slowly and making his way to the couch. Hannibal didn't look back as he left the room, sure that when he returned only a few moments later, Will would be sleeping, just as he should be. He had no doubt that the drug would do its job.

When he returned within the next ten minutes, he was carrying an easel and canvas, which he set down only a few away from where Will slept. He couldn't hold back a smile as he saw that the young man's face was turned to the side, towards where he stood.

Even in his sleep, Will was instinctively drawn to him.

That wasn't a bad thing at all, Hannibal told himself as he spread the palette of paints out on the desk beside him, contemplating just where to start. It had been a while since he had given himself the task of finishing a painting in a single night, but he could do it.

Especially when he had this lovely of a subject to drawn inspiration from.

He worked quickly, the painting springing to life under his capable hands. He assiduously mixed the paints, all of them nothing more to him than the varying shades of desire that he felt for Will.

Hannibal had no idea how much time passed; time ceased to exist for him as he watched Will sleep and the painting took shape under his hands. He was surprised when he glanced towards the windows and saw the grey light of early dawn beginning to touch the sky.

So, he had worked all night, and he would feel tired later today. But that didn't matter. He had created this masterpiece, this second step along the road to Will Graham's seduction and subjugation. It would be only the first of many, if he had his way.

Somehow, all of those shades of desire has managed to coalesce into one coherent whole in the course of one evening. Hannibal coldn't help but be pleased with the result; it was far beyond what even he had been expecting. He had a right to be proud.

Stepping back, he contemplated the painting from different angles, tilting his head this way and that before finally looking towards Will's sleeping form again.

How would he see this? Would be be repulsed? Or intrigued?

It hardly mattered what Will thought, really. No matter what his feelings were when he first saw this painting, he would be brought around to the correct way of thinking -- the way that Hannibal wanted him to think. That was only one part of the plan.

He would simply let Will sleep until he awakened, and maybe he would be able to sleep for a couple of hours himself. He badly needed it; he felt rumpled and a bit out of sorts, which wasn't the way that he wanted to greet Will when the young man finally woke up.

He had to be wide awake, and ready to deal with whatever Will might think, when they spoke again. He had to be here just moments after Will saw this painting for the first time.

Sleep was required. But only enough to hone his sense to a keen, sharp knife edge.

With one more look at the painting, and a last lingering look at Will, he strode out of the office, determined to be back within no more than a few moments after Will had awakened.

Blurred Reality

Chapter Summary

> The line between Will's reality and the dream world he too often finds himself enmeshed in is beginning to blur.

Will woke with a start, his eyes flying open .Why did his bed suddenly feel so narrow? And why was he still wearing all of his clothes -- even his shoes?

It took him a moment to get his bearings -- and realize that he was lying on the comfortable couch in Hannibal's office, with a blanket tucked around him and a soft pillow beneath his head. He was sure that pillow hadn't been there when he'd lay down last night ....

Last night. He'd spent the night here.

That was obvious, given that sunlight was pouring through the windows. He looked at the clock on the wall behind Hannibal's desk, and was shocked to see that it was a little after eight in the morning. Usually, he was up and about by this time.

It was a good thing that he didn't classes today, he thought as he sat up, wincing and running a hand through his hair. But he would probably be called into the FBI office -- he and Jack were working on a case, and he was sure that there would be another murder soon.

That was something he'd intended to talk to Hannibal about -- the strange feelings that he'd been having about this particular killer, as if he was sinking deeper into the murderer's mind.

That wasn't unusual for him, given his empathic abilities. But this time, it felt as though he was going further than he usually did, and he was having a harder time than usual pulling himself back from the edge of a killer's mind and into his own.

The line between reality and his inner thoughts was starting to blur.

Hannibal was the only person who really seemed to understand that, and even he didn't know what it was like. No one could know what it was like to slip into the mind of a murderer, to feel that rage and pain and whatever else might go along with it.

Will ran a hand through his hair as he stood up, clearing his throat and looking around. Hannibal wasn't here, that was obvious; he was probably either still asleep, or in the kitchen making breakfast. He should probably go to the kitchen and make his apologies for falling asleep.

The thought hit him before he could take a step towards the door, making his eyes widen in shock and bringing a startled gasp to his lips. He'd slept all night. Here, on the couch in

Hannibal's office. It was the first time in what felt like forever that he'd gotten a full night's sleep.

That in itself was incredible. The other amazing thing was that he'd been able to do it *here*, in the office, in a place where he shouldn't really feel safe.

He shouldn't have been able to sleep so deeply in a place where he didn't feel entirely comfortable. It was a strange feeling to know that he had, and it made him look around the office, wondering what it was about this place that could make those walls come down.

He frowned when he saw the easel, standing near Hannibal's desk, facing away from him.

An easel? Had Hannibal been painting something last night, while he lay here and slept? A thought occurred to Will, making him swallow hard, his eyes widening again. Could Hannibal have painted .... *him*? Had the doctor captured his sleeping form on canvas?

That would *really* be weird, Will told himself as he took a step towards the easel. Why would Hannibal want to paint *him*? He was nothing special.

But maybe Hannibal thought he was.

The idea stopped him in his tracks, making his breath catch in his throat. Could Hannibal possibly think that way about him? Was there more to the other man's feelings that plain and simple lust? Could there be more underneath the surface that Will hadn't seen yet?

He wasn't going to indulge in thoughts like that, not until he could find out for sure if he had any reason to hope that they were true. But it was hard to tamp down on that little spark of hope that flared to life within him, hard to hold it back and tell it not to flare into life too soon.

Will's steps slowed as he approached the easel; suddenly, he wasn't so sure that he wanted to see what Hannibal had painted. What if it wasn't a flattering representation? What if he had seen something in Will that wasn't something anyone should gaze upon?

Whatever it was, he was going to look at it, Will told himself firmly. Hannibal might not even have painted him. He was jumping to conclusions here.

He turned the easel towards him -- and his mouth fell open in shock.

Hannibal had indeed painted him -- but in a way that he never would have expected. He found himself looking at a portrait of .... himself, naked and vulnerable, his eyes closed, his head thrown back against the pillows, lips parted, cheeks flushed, his hand on his cock.

Hannibal had painted him ..... *masturbating*.

It was a beautiful painting. He had to admit that. Hannibal had caught a sense of his vulnerability, even as he seemed to celebrate a raw masculine power.

The man in the painting was obviously at ease with his body, in a way that Will had never felt when he was awake. Was that what Hannibal saw when he looked at him?

For a few moments, Will was filled with a sense of panic. Had he actually *done* this, while Hannibal watched and painted what he saw? Had he fallen so deeply asleep that he couldn't control his own actions? Was that what this depicted -- himself losing all of his inhibitions?

No, he couldn't have jerked off in his sleep. Will took one deep breath, then another, closing his eyes and trying to calm his racing heart. If he closed his eyes, then opened them and looked again, he'd probably realize that he hadn't seen what he thought he had.

But when he opened his eyes, the painting was still there, just as lifelike as before. He could see nothing in the painting that he should be ashamed of -- other than the fact that he didn't want anyone to think Hannibal could see him like this.

He looked so .... so uninhibited. So .... well, *sensual*.

Did Hannibal really see him like this? Was he this appealing in the other man's eyes? Will felt his cheeks grow warm with a blush that he couldn't hold back. The truth was, he *wanted* Hannibal to think of him this way. He *wanted* to be seen as sensual and desirable.

Though not by just anybody, he told himself. Only by this man. What others thought of him didn't matter. Only how Hannibal saw him meant anything to him.

This painting only seemed to make the lines between the dream world he spent so much time in and the reality that he had to live in blur even more. He felt sunned, shocked, as though he was moving through syrup. Nothing seemed quite real, quite *connected*.

If he wasn't careful, then he was going to sink into that dream world, and the blurred reality would disappear forever. He wouldn't be able to come back from his dreams.

Would that be so horrible? a little voice in the back of his mind whispered. If he lived in that dream world, then he could have anything he wanted. He could *become* anything he wanted. He could have Hannibal, without having to observe any proprieties.

No, he told himself firmly. He had to live in the real world. He had no choice.

"Do you like it?" Hannibal's voice brought him back to his senses, made him look at the painting again as a burning blush seemed to suffuse his face.

"I ...." He didn't know what to say. All he could do was stare at Hannibal as the other man approached him, a smile on his face. He stopped in front of Will, studying him; then, reaching out to grasp Will's shoulders, Hannibal yanked him forward and fastened that demanding mouth on his.

Stuck in A Moment You Can't Get Out Of

Chapter Summary

An unexpected kiss can lead to all sorts of consequences.

Will went limp in Hannibal's arms, as though his legs were giving out underneath him. He didn't think he could stand up without leaning against the other man; he seemed to have lost the ability to stand up, even though his body was suddenly aflame with desire.

Hannibal's lips on his weren't soft and exploratory, as they'd been the first time the two of them had kissed. This kiss was much more than that; it was demanding, hard, rough.

He was leaning against Hannibal, the other man's arm around his waist; Hannibal's other hand was against the back of his head, making sure that he couldn't break away from the bruising kiss. Hannibal was completely in control; Will could do nothing but follow his lead.

When the kiss finally ended, he couldn't speak, couldn't move; he could barely even breathe.

How could one kiss, one touch of a pair of lips upon another, turn his legs to water and his mind to mush? No one else's kiss had ever affected him in this way; not any of the women he'd ever kissed, or any of the men he'd fooled around with. None of them had really registered.

Hannibal was the only person who could move him to passion.

No, that wasn't entirely true, he told himself as he stared into the other man's eyes. He'd been moved to great passion before, but that had only been a physical need that his body had demanded he sate. This was entirely different. It was more than merely physical.

It wasn't love. No, this was as far from love as any emotion could get. But it was something more than lust, more than passion. He couldn't quite put his finger on it.

"Do you want more, Will?" Hannibal asked, his voice very soft in the quiet of the room. "All you have to do is ask for it. I'll give you what you want, but I can't do that unless you tell me just what it is you want. I'm not a mind reader, you know."

Will hadn't realized that they were moving slowly across the room until he felt his back press against the door; somehow, Hannibal had managed to pin him there, restricting his ability to move. But he couldn't have moved if he'd tried; he was too lost in that gaze.

All the air seemed to be sucked out of the room; he couldn't *breathe*.

He was speaking, words that he wasn't consciously thinking of before he said them.

"I want you," he rasped out, the words shocking him even as they came out of his mouth. "Right over there. On that couch. No more words. No more talking. Just shut up and take me." To Will's surprise, his voice was strong and firm, with no hesitation.

He hadn't been so sure that he wanted Hannibal to take him again, not after the last time. He had thought that they would just talk and clear the air, and if they were going to be involved, to slow things down from the frenetic pace they seemed to be progressing at.

But those words he'd just uttered had taken away any chance of things slowing down .If anything, it was all speeding up now, circumstances whirling out of his control.

How could he stop this forward momentum? And did he really want to?

He felt paralyzed, as though he'd backed himself into a corner and he couldn't an inch in one direction or the other. With those few words, he had gotten stuck in a moment that he couldn't get out of, a moment that felt as though it was drawing out forever.

Then, Hannibal was turning him around and backing him towards the couch against the wall, the couch that he'd slept on just a few hours before. He was moving towards it without any will of his own, and he knew what would happen once he was lying there again.

Hannibal would do as he'd asked, and take him again. This time, there would be no surprises, no sudden moves, no unexpectedness. He was going into this with his eyes wide open, and he didn't that Hannibal was trying to hide anything from him.

That picture had changed everything. That, and the fact that he'd finally spoken what was in his mind, even if he hadn't been sure that he wanted to say the words even as they came out.

He glanced towards the easel again, but it was turned away from him, which was probably a good thing. He didn't need to see himself as Hannibal did; he needed to try to keep his feet firmly planted on the ground, and not try to make this into more than it was.

The problem was that he didn't know exactly *what* this was.

All he knew was that he wanted more of what Hannibal had already given him, that feeling of flying through the clouds, being completely free and unfettered. No one else had ever made him feel that way, and he doubted that anyone else ever could.

He fell backwards onto the couch, landing with a slight thump and a soft gasp. At once, Hannibal's hands were on the buttons of his shirt, pulling at the fabric until it slipped from his shoulders, then turning his attention to the button fly of Will's jeans and pushing the denim down.

And then Hannibal was shrugging out of his robe as Will kicked his jeans off, easing himself onto the couch and bending over Will, staring down at him with a frightening intensity.

This was the first time he'd really looked at Hannibal nude, and the sight took his breath away. He wanted to let his eyes feast on the other man's body, then let his hands follow that same path, touching, exploring, memorizing every inch of that magnificent body.

He wanted Hannibal inside him again. *Now.*

"I don't keep lube in this room," Hannibal said, his voice very soft, a hint of warning in his tone. "And I won't break the mood by going to look for it."

Will stared up at him, transfixed. This was another of those moments that he couldn't get out of; he knew that no matter what he said, the future was inevitable. He'd sealed his fate when he had let Hannibal lay him down here on the couch without thinking of any consequences.

He didn't want to think about them. He wanted Hannibal, right here, right now, and he would worry about the consequences of that later. He was going to reach out and take what he wanted; he would be selfish for once, and think about what *he* needed.

"I guess we don't need it," he murmured, his mouth dry. It would only hurt for a few seconds, he told himself. At least, he *hoped* that would be the case.

Hannibal frowned, then raised his brows as though a thought had just come to him.

"Wait," he said, shifting his position, a thoughtful expression coming over his face. "There *is* a way -- and I think it's something you would enjoy." He looked down at Will questioningly, studying his face before he spoke again. "You've been with other men before, correct?"

Will nodded slowly, feeling the need to qualify that statement. "I've fooled around with other guys. Blow jobs, stuff like that. But you've the only man I've ever .... really been with."

Hannibal's smile flickered again before he raised himself onto his knees, moving up Will's body until he was poised above the young man's face, looking down at him with that strange little smile hovering on his lips. "I think you know what I mean."

Will could only gulp, nodding, his eyes wide. He did indeed know what Hannibal meant, though he couldn't quite believe what was happening.

He'd dreamed about this, but had never thought those dreams could come true.

And now they were. Will closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. If this was another moment he was going to be stuck in, then he never wanted to get out of it.

A Dangerous Weakness

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal knows that Will could prove to be a dangerous adversary in the future, but for the moment, that's the last thing he cares about.

Hannibal looked down at the young man below him, his gaze locking with Will's. Those brilliant blue eyes seemed to hold him in place; for just a moment, he was incapable of speech, or even thought. He was utterly mesmerized by the look in those eyes.

Will looked determined, as though he had made a decision and intended to stick to it. He looked implacable, strong, unyielding.

This wasn't the complacent Will Graham he was used to.

This young man could be dangerous for him, dangerous for everything that his life was and would be in the future. Will could prove to be his undoing, yet he couldn't resist the lure of that perfect body, that beautiful face, the siren song of all the plans he had for Will.

But none of that seemed to matter now, not when he was so close to something that he'd fantasized about for quite a while now. The desire had invaded his dreams, making him awaken in a cold sweat, his body taut with need, his mind focused on one thing.

His cock in Will Graham's mouth.

It was going to happen, here and now, without him even trying to maneuver Will into it. Somehow, the peculiar circumstances of the night before had led to this -- the two of them naked on the couch, embarking on an experience that would bring them both satisfaction.

Hannibal had no doubt that he would enjoy this; he was in control of the situation, as always. He could end this at any time, leave Will hanging -- but he didn't want to do that. He wanted to see this through, and let them both take their pleasure.

Even if finding that pleasure might weaken his resolve.

Will Graham was a dangerous weakness for him; this young man might be fragile in many ways, but there was a core of strength in Will that could make him a dangerous adversary if they stood on opposite sides. He was walking a fine line.

He couldn't believe that taking Will had been a mistake, not when it had yielded such pleasurable results. But he would have to be careful, keep himself guarded. He couldn't let his desire for Will turn into a weakness that could ultimately bring about his downfall.

He *would* bend Will Graham to his own will, Hannibal told himself firmly. He would bend him, break him, and reassemble those pieces as *he* wanted them.

That process had already begun, and there was nothing that Will could do to stop it. His fate was already sealed -- though if he became too much of a weakness, those future plans might have to be changed, though that would be something of an annoyance.

Hannibal closed his eyes, his hips thrusting forward into ecstasy.

Carte Blanche

Chapter Summary

> This is only the first time he'll exercise his dominion over Will, and Hannibal is enjoying every moment of it.

The first thing that came to Hannibal's mind was how incredibly *hot* Will's mouth was. But he should have expected that.

The young man made a strangled sound deep in his throat, and Hannibal pulled back, not wanting to choke Will before this had even gotten started. He could hear Will take a deep breath, and then that warm, wet tongue was flicking over the tip of his cock.

Hannibal wondered if Will would be as good at this as he'd thought the young man would be; he had said that he'd had experience with other men, after all. He may have been a virgin in some ways until just a few nights ago, but in this instance, he seemed to know what he was doing.

Oh, yes, Hannibal though as that tongue swirled over the head of his cock again. Will definitely knew what he was doing in this arena.

He would return the favor, of course -- but that would come later. He intended to enjoy this for a while, before taking Will at least once.

First, he was going to let Will pleasure *him*.

Will was reaching for him, as though to pull him closer; ah, no, that wasn't going to happen, Hannibal told himself. He captured Will's wrists easily, leaning forward even as his hips thrust again, pinning Will's thin wrists to the pillow above his head.

He didn't have to see Will's eyes widen in surprise to know that they had; only seconds later, that warm, wet mouth resumed its work, feeling more heated than ever.

Hannibal closed his eyes, letting himself sink into the pleasure, but staying as alert as he possibly could. He didn't want to let this go on for too long, of course; he had to judge as to when it was time to move back down Will's body and take care of what he intended to do.

But for now, he intended to enjoy every second of this.

He thrust his hips forward again, knowing that he might be giving Will too much to handle, but not really caring. Will had wanted this, and now he needed to deal with the consequences of his desire. He would just have to do the best he could.

Hannibal looked down, fascinated by what he saw. He had often dreamed of fucking Will's mouth, but the reality was far better than the imagination.

He hadn't expected Will to look so utterly helpless -- or utterly desirable. The young man's eyes were closed, his head thrown back; he was obviously having a bit of a hard time deep-throating Hannibal, and for just a moment, he wished that he wasn't so well-endowed.

However, that feeling passed within a few seconds. He was rapidly becoming lost in the building pleasure, his body growing taut and tense.

The feeling of fucking Will's mouth was exhilarating.

The wet warmth of that mouth surrounding him, the knowledge that he was doing this even though his mind might be telling him that he didn't want it -- they combined to give Hannibal a rush of excitement, a feeling of victory, of having broken Will in some way.

He was drawing closer to completion, and that wasn't what he wanted. There was more on the agenda here than just the pleasure of fucking Will's mouth; as much as he wanted this to go on, he knew that it couldn't. Coming in Will's mouth would be saved for another day.

Slowly, he withdrew from that deliciously warm cavern, moving down Will's body until he was face to face with the young man again. Will already looked dazed, his gaze slightly unfocused.

Hannibal was struck by how beautiful he'd become.

There was something about that dazed, confused look that took his breath away. Will's cheeks were flushed, his lips reddened and parted, his blue eyes seeming to blaze in the dim early morning light. His chest was rising and falling rapidly, his breath coming in short gasps.

He'd never seen anyone look this beautiful, or this desirable. There was something about Will that almost made him want to be gentle, rather than simply taking him.

Could he do that? Hannibal had to wonder. Was it possible for him to let softer feelings show, or even to have those feelings? He didn't think he ever had; if those kinds of feelings had ever existed in him, it was so long ago that they were too deeply buried to access now.

But somehow, Will seemed to make them want to come out.

That in itself was dangerous, he warned himself. Having those feelings was a sign of weakness, and he had told himself far too many times that he couldn't let Will Graham become a weakness. That would be disaster for him, and for his future plans.

If he started to soften towards Will, he wouldn't able to carry out those plans. And even if he *did* care for this young man, those feelings couldn't last.

Those feelings had no place in his world. They never would.

This was what their relationship was about. Each of them assuaging a physical need -- and Will not realizing that indulging in those needs was drawing him ever closer to his final fate.

Not knowing that he was bring broken more and more each time they collided.

Hannibal released Will's wrists from his grip to push the young man's legs up against his chest, one hand moving between those parted thighs to stroke a finger over his entrance. Will was tight and tense, just as he'd known he would be; this wasn't going to be easy.

"Are you sure that you're ready for this?" he asked, wanting to give Will a chance to back down, though e was sure that he already knew what the answer would be.

Will nodded, looking even more determined. "I need you. Now."

This was only going to be the first of innumerable times he would hear Will say those words; they were music to his ears, opening the door to a host of possibilities for the future. He had been given *carte blanche*, and he intended to take full advantage of that fact.

Will Graham would burn for him just as he burned for Will. His desire would be equally matched -- but Will's desire would be tempered with submissiveness.

Eventually, he would lead Will to a brilliant, glorious death. But for now, he would enjoy hm, take pleasure in the dominance that Will was handing to him on a silver platter.

Taking a deep breath, he thrust into paradise.

Almost Hear You Sigh

Chapter Summary

Hannibal's manipulative thoughts don't stop, even when he's in the midst of intimacy.

Hannibal hissed between his teeth, closing his eyes as his body went even more taut and tense than it had been. He'd known that Will would be tight, but he hadn't expected this incredible heat, this inferno that only made his desire rage even higher.

This wasn't going to last long at the rate he was going. He would have to slow down.

Taking a deep breath, Hannibal pulled back, almost all the way out, looking down at Will. He knew that this wasn't entirely pleasurable for Will, and he hadn't intended for it to be. He wanted to see just how far he could push the young man past his pain threshold.

That would show him a lot about Will -- and about how far he could take things before he would have to pull back and exercise a bit of caution. He didn't intend to harm Will, of course, but he certainly wasn't above inflicting more than a little pain to see just how far he could go.

After all, pushing past barriers was one thing he was good at. He and Will had done quite a bit of that in their impromptu psychiatric sessions; now he wanted to translate that into the physical. He didn't know yet whether that would be easily accomplished.

Hannibal took a deep breath before he pushed inside Will again, taking his time and moving slowly. He wasn't going to hurry; he would take his time and savor this pleasure.

He captured Will's wrists again, raising them above the young man's head as his hips thrust forward of their own volition. He couldn't stop himself from moving forward, his hips thrusting harder than he'd intended them to; he was getting carried away by the physical sensations.

Much more of this, and he'd completely submerge himself in Will.

As much as he wanted to do just that, Hannibal knew that he had to keep his wits about him; he had to study Will, to watch his reactions, to find out just how far he could push this fragile beauty before he began to crack. He had a feeling that it wouldn't take much.

He would keep pushing, just a little at a time, until Will finally broke, shattering into innumerable little pieces. He would thoroughly enjoy reassembling those pieces, putting Will back together as he saw fit, training him to be exactly what Hannibal wanted.

Oh, that was a lovely fantasy. But it would be a while before Will was at that point; he would have to slow down, to be patient, to let that breakdown happen gradually.

He would lull Will with pleasure first, draw him in until he was so tightly bound in Hannibal that there was no way he could envision life without their bond. Then, only then, could he be sure that Will would slowly break under whatever pressure was brought to bear on him.

The pleasure that he felt at the moment was almost lulling *him*, and he didn't want that. He wanted to keep his senses alert, honed; sharpened; he wanted to be aware of all that Will was feeling, aware of anything that seemed to be particularly pleasurable for him.

But it was hard to do that when he wanted to concentrate on his *own* pleasure.

Taking Will like this had been a mistake; he didn't want to look at the young man's face, didn't want to see that pleasure written on his handsome features.

It was much easier when he took Will from behind, when he could concentrate on the interactions between their bodies, and not be distracted by how beautiful Will looked when he wa being pleasured. Maybe what was needed was for him to add a little pain to that pleasure.

His next thrust was harder and deeper; Will moaned softly, straining against Hannibal's grip on his wrists. Hannibal allowed himself a small smile of satisfaction; yes, *that* was more of the reaction that he had wanted to see.

He needed to discover just how to break Will, just how far he could push him to the edge this time. He wasn't going to tip the scales; it wasn't time for that yet, as much as he'd like to do so. But this was only the first of many times; all he needed was to have Will coming back for more.

Oh, he would do that, Hannibal thought. He would keep coming back after this. He wouldn't be able to resist the intimacy that was growing between the two of them.

Will needed that intimacy, needed it desperately.

He sucked in a deep breath, aware that he was on the verge of orgasm. He hadn't expected it to happen this quickly, hadn't expected his own desire to flare this hot and high. He would have to rethink his plan of action before he took Will again.

He'd be able to relax and enjoy fucking Will more in the future; this time was more of an exploration, for him to see how much further he needed to push.

He closed his eyes for a moment as he thrust again, then again, hard and deep, his rhythm starting to become disjointed. The closer he came to climax, the more unhinged he felt; this wasn't working as he had thought it would. Not at all.

Will was too tempting, too much of a distraction. It was too disconcerting to be able to hold him down and watch every fleeting expression on his face.

This wasn't what he had expected. He had thought he would be more in control.

He *needed* that control; if it slipped away from him, then this was just sex, and he wanted his physical relationship with Will to be more than that. It wasn't based on emotions, or even on physical pleasure; it was based on how much control he could exert.

At the moment, it felt strangely as though *he* might be the one under control.

No, that wasn't going to be allowed to happen. Anger flared through him, making him thrust forward even more roughly, until Will cried out and squirmed under him, those intense blue eyes opening and staring unseeingly up at him, his lips parting on Hannibal's name.

He could almost hear Will sigh, almost hear something more behind that whisper, before it became a cry of pain. He could feel Will's body tighten around him, just as his own orgasm overtook him. He thrust forward once more, his own soft groan joining Will's.

Hannibal let himself collapse on top of Will, not caring that the young man hadn't achieved orgasm along with him. The last thing on his mind was Will's pleasure; he was too disconcerted by the fact that he hadn't been able to view Will objectively while they were intimate.

Will whimpered softly, struggling against Hannibal's grip on his wrists; slowly, Hannibal released him and sat up, looking down at the young man, raising a brow.

"I believe I owe you something," he said softly, one hand moving down to stroke Will's erection. "I'm sorry, Will. I didn't mean to take my pleasure and ignore yours. It won't happen again." A lie, of course, but Will didn't know that, and never would.

His lips curved in a smile at the thought of what he was about to do.

Hannibal slowly pulled out of Will, then slid down his body, keeping his gaze fixed on the other man's face, on those intense blue eyes, before he took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

Falling Away With You

Chapter Summary

Will isn't sure quite what to think of this new relationship with Hannibal, and how fast it's going.

Will gasped as Hannibal's lips trailed down his body, his eyes opening wide. He wanted to bury his fingers in Hannibal's hair, but somehow, he didn't think the other man would like that, so he kept them clenched at his sides, his body taut and tense.

He hadn't expected Hannibal to do this, but then, he hadn't expected to be left hanging, either. This all felt surreal, as if he was in some kind of fugue state.

Hannibal's mouth was soft and warm on his cock, the sensations that his tongue was eliciting unlike anything that Will had ever felt before. He'd had other men give him blow jobs, but nothing had ever been like this. He was sure that he was going to explode at any second.

But somehow, he didn't. Hannibal managed to hold him back, even as that wicked, wanton tongue urged him on towards completion.

Will couldn't stop his hips from thrusting upwards, his body begging for more.

He could dimly feel Hannibal's hands on his hips, holding him down, pressing him against the plush velvet of the couch. Had Hannibal really just made love to him here -- if it could be called that? It hadn't seemed like making love at all.

It had seemed like an assertion of Hannibal's authority over him. There had been nothing about it that he could call loving or gentle. No, Hannibal had *taken* him.

But wasn't that what he wanted? To be taken, to be pulled out of himself and give an experience he'd never had before? Wasn't that part of his overwhelming desire for Hannibal -- knowing that no one else could give him what this man could?

He gasped again as Hannibal deep-throated his cock, lifting his head to look down at his lover. Hannibal's cheeks were hollow with the force of his sucking, his hair hanging around his face in damp tendrils, his eyes seeming to blaze up at Will.

Those eyes held all the desire in the world.

No one had ever looked at him like that. No one had ever wanted him in the way that Hannibal did. And no one had ever touched him and set him on fire in the way that Hannibal did.

This was a new experience, all right. This was something that he'd dreamed about but had never thought that he would feel, this overwhelming lust that completely overrode everything else in his life. This was like some kind of vivid dream that had miraculously come true.

Everything that had happened between himself and Hannibal in the past few days seemed like a dream, from the first time Hannibal had taken him until this very moment. He could swear that he would wake up at any moment, alone in his bed at home.

Alone, burning for Hannibal, needing that touch, his body on fire with the constant ache of his desire for what he'd thought he could never have.

He was so close to the edge now; all it would take was another few seconds, if Hannibal kept up what he was doing. His body was coiled, ready to jump from a daringly high precipice, secure in the knowledge that he would be caught before he could plunge to the ground.

Or would he? Was Hannibal going to be there for him?

Just as that thought coalesced into his mind, his body seemed to explode in a burst of pleasure, drawing a soft moan from his throat. His hands clenched at his sides, his hips jerking up against Hannibal's hands. He was sure that he saw a shower of sparks, all the colors of the rainbow.

Nothing had ever felt like this; pure and utter bliss, as if his body had been stretched taut and had finally been given the release it craved. He felt as though he was melting, boneless, unable to move or speak; all he could do was take deep, gasping breaths.

He felt as though a part of himself had fallen away, never to be found again.

But wasn't this what he'd wanted? To be falling away with Hannibal, giving himself to the man he'd wanted for so long, finally achieving the dream that he had thought would never come true. It hardly seemed possible that he'd reached that peak.

Slowly, Will raised a hand to press it against his chest, feeling the rapid beating of his heart. His hand was trembling, as was his entire body.

Hannibal was sitting back on his heels, regarding Will with a slight smile curving his lips, looking very pleased with himself. He tilted his head to the side as their gazes met, dark eyes locking with blue, his expression unreadable, inscrutable.

Without warning, he leaned forward, taking Will's face between his hands and studying him intently before placing his lips on Will's, the kiss hard and demanding.

Pure ecstasy shot through Will at the touch of those lips; he could taste *himself* in Hannibal's kiss, and he didn't find that unpleasant at all.

"I think you needed that very badly."

Will could only nod in acquiescence; he had needed that release, had needed it for a long time. It was as though something in him had broken free, as if some of the barriers he kept so carefully erected around himself had crumbled to the ground.

It was exhilarating. And frightening. He hadn't wanted to let himself be so completely exposed, naked in more than just the physical. At this moment, Hannibal could see into his soul.

Hannibal reached out to him, taking his hands and slowly pulling him upright into a sitting position. Will winced as he sat up; he was going to be sore for a while, and a part of him wished that Hannibal had been a little gentler with fucking him.

He winced again at the sound of that word in his head. *Fucking.* What they'd done was more than just fucking, wasn't it? It had to be.

He couldn't call it making love. Not really. But it was more than just sex.

Hannibal knew him as no one else did. They might not have love between them -- at least not yet -- but they had something that no one else had given him. Something that he couldn't put a name to, but which existed nonetheless. Something that he wouldn't let go.

"You're going to be sore for the rest of the day," Hannibal said softly, reaching out to caress his cheek. "I'm sorry about that. I probably should have broken the mood, but I wasn't prepared to have you change your mind. I didn't want to take that chance."

"I wouldn't have," Will murmured, watching Hannibal as the other man uncoiled his lanky body gracefully, getting up and moving across the floor to pick up his robe and don it. Will suddenly felt very vulnerable, very naked, and very exposed.

Maybe that was because he *was* naked and exposed, he told himself wryly. More so than he'd ever been in his entire life.

He was completely vulnerable to this man, every nerve raw and exposed.

"I know you have somewhere to be," Hannibal told him, his voice suddenly distant, as though what they'd done had never happened. "I won't keep you. But I hope you'll come back tonight. I don't want another three days to go by before I see you again."

Will felt dazed, lost, confused. Hannibal was pushing him away one moment, and telling him to come back in the next. What did he really want?

Will watched as Hannibal gathered his clothes, then walked over and handed them to him, his expression grave. "I want this to continue, Will. I don't intend to let you go. But it isn't a simple thing between us. There's a great deal for us to discuss about what we both want."

Will nodded, unable to think of anything to say. He wanted to start a conversation, to say something about what had happened between them, but his mind was a blank.

For once in his life, he was completely speechless.

It was as though having sex with Hannibal had robbed him of the power to speak, or even to think, as if falling away with him into that incredible pleasure had taken away some intrinsic part of himself. But at the moment, it seemed like a worthwhile trade.

"I'll see you later tonight, Will," Hannibal said softly, a smile on his lips. "Come over whenever you want. I'll be here. Ready for you." With those words, he turned and left the room.

Will got dressed in a daze, not really thinking about what he was doing. He didn't look at the painting that had started it all as he made his way to the front door; he wasn't ready to see himself like that again. It still felt as though he was walking through a dream.

Had all of this really happened? It felt surreal, insubstantial, as if it would all fade away into nothingness if he thought about it too much.

No, it wasn't a dream, he thought, raising a hand to his mouth. Hannibal had done those things to him. They'd been together. It had finally happened -- and he didn't know what to do about it. He felt as though he was stuck in limbo, not knowing which path to take.

He needed to think about all of this, to turn it over in his mind. But there was really only on way to go, wasn't there? Forward, with Hannibal. This was what he had wanted, and now that he had it, he'd be a fool to let it go when it had only barely begun.

Will almost moaned as he licked his lips, closing his eyes, feeling unsteady on his feet. It was all such a rush, an incredible, mind-blowing experience.

Hannibal's taste was still in his mouth.

By Any Other Name

Chapter Summary

Of all the things Will expects from Hannibal, this isn't one of them.

Will grimaced and bit back a soft moan as he lowered himself onto his living room couch, kicking off his shoes and leaning his head back against the cushions. The dogs, sensing that something was wrong, came to lay at his feet, looking up at him with worried eyes.

He'd thought that he wouldn't make it through the day, that he would have to excuse himself and leave the scene of the crime they'd been investigating. He was so horribly sore by the middle of the day that there had been a few times he'd wanted to scream.

He'd managed to hide the pain he was in -- barely.

The worst thing had been when Jack had noticed -- even though Will had tried to turn his attention away from the fact that he was limping slightly.

That conversation still brought a blush to his cheeks.

"What's wrong with you?" Jack had asked, raising an eyebrow in question. "You don't look like you got in a fight, but you're walking like you are." He indicated Will's limp as the two of them walked back into the hallway of the house they were in. "What happened?"

Will hadn't wanted to answer, but he hadn't had much of a choice. It wasn't like he could lie and say that there was nothing wrong with him. "I, ah, tripped down the steps. Turned my ankle pretty badly. Don't worry, it'll only hurt for a couple of days. I'll be fine."

"Looks to me like you're having problems with something a little higher up than your ankle," Jack had replied, lifting a brow again and glancing pointedly at Will's ass.

Just thinking about it made him groan with embarrassment; Jack had obviously known that he'd been up to something the night before. While he was sure that Jack wouldn't think any less of hm for being intimate with a man, he definitely wouldn't approve of that man being Hannibal Lecter.

For some reason, he had the feeling that Jack didn't like Hannibal very much.

He didn't know why Jack would dislike Hannibal; after all, he was the one who had insisted that they go to Hannibal for help in catching some fo the killers they'd been after. But there always seemed to be an undertone of dark disapproval whenever Jack said Hannibal's name.

Will shook his head, blinking, feeling disoriented. He had slept well on Hannibal's couch last night, but the busy day -- as well as the events of this morning -- were catching up with him.

He closed his eyes, letting himself fall to the side, resting his head on the two soft pillows on one end of the couch. He wouldn't sleep here all evening, of course -- he would get up and eat something, and then go to bed and hope that he could fall asleep again.

He would only rest for a few minutes ....

Will didn't know how much later it was when he was awakened by an insistent knocking at the front door; he blinked blearlily, peering at the clock as he reached for his glasses. Two hours had passed since he'd last looked at the clock; he must have been more tired than he'd realized.

He got to his feet slowly, still wincing; he would probably be even more sore tomorrow. After he found out who was at the door and sent them away quickly, maybe he'd soak in the tub for a while. Or take a long, hot shower -- which he probably needed anyway.

He didn't bother to look through the peephole before he opened the door; whoever it was, he would just tell them that he'd had a rough day and didn't have time to socialize.

Will pulled open the door .... and stood there gaping in amazement.

There were no less than six people standing on his front porch, all carrying huge bouquets of flowers -- sweet Williams, to be exact. Pink, purple, red -- the flowers seemed to leap out at him in the fading light of early evening, the riot of color dazzling his eyes.

"I .... I didn't order these. There must be some mistake," he managed to say, turning to the man who had knocked on the door and was holding a delivery slip out to him. "If somebody sent these, you've got to have the wrong house. Nobody sends me flowers."

"Looks like you're wrong about that, Mr. Graham," the man told him with a smile, his voice cheerful. "I think somebody did send you flowers. A lot of flowers."

"All of these are for me?" Will blinked again, feeling as though he had woken up in the Twilight Zone. Who would be sending him flowers at this time of night? It wasn't his birthday, or any kind of special occasion, so this *had* to be a mistake.

But the delivery man was shaking his head again.

"No, these are definitely for you. There's no mistake," he said firmly. "Now, where do you want us to put these? We've got some other deliveries to make -- can't hang around here all night. Just tell us where to leave them, and we'll be out of your hair."

"Ah .... on the coffee table is fine," Will managed to reply, standing back so that they could all troop past him with the flowers. He had no idea what he would do with them all.

He didn't close the door when they left, instead going out onto the porch as the delivery van drove off. Whoever had sent these flowers had thrown him a curve ball that he hadn't expected -- though he was starting to have an inkling of who might have done this.

No, Hannibal wouldn't send flowers. That wasn't his style. He wasn't that kind of man; he might do something like that one a special occasion, but not for no reason.

It couldn't be Hannibal. With a soft sigh, Will went back into the house, closing the door behind him and staring at the profusion of bright blooms. The scent was heady; he was sure that the house would smell like Sweet Williams for days, even after all the flowers had died.

His head jerked around when another knock came, this one louder and more insistent than the last.

Who the hell was *this*? Will almost felt angry as he stepped back to the door, yanking it open. Words were on his tongue, sharp, cutting words that he had every intention of speaking -- until he saw who was standing there in the waning daylight.

"W-what are you doing here?" The words slipped out before the could stop them; he stood back, waiting for Hannibal to step into the room.

He did so, unbuttoning his coat and tossing it over the back of a chair. "Ah, I see that the flowers arrived," he said with a smile, turning to Will. "I hadn't intended to send them, but .... I felt that I should apologize to you for being far too rough with you this morning."

"No apology required," Will told him, unsure of what else to say. "I appreciate the flowers, but you didn't have to go to so much trouble."

"Ah, but I did." Hannibal stepped towards him, laying his hands on Will's shoulders and leaning close to him before those hands moved down, Hannibal's arms sliding around his waist to pull him close against the other man's body, those lips so close to his that he could feel Hannibal's soft breath.

"A sweet William by any other name would still be as sweet," Hannibal murmured, his lips barely brushing Will's mouth. "But as lovely as they are, the flowers can't begin to compete with you."

He was dying. He couldn't breathe, couldn't speak.

And then his arms were around Hannibal's neck, pulling him closer, and the scent of sweet Williams was all around them, blocking out everything else. There was only Hannibal, those arms crushing him against that lean body, those lips claiming his.

He was dying, and he didn't want to be brought back to life.

Incendiary

Chapter Summary

Kissing Will fires Hannibal's blood - and gives him all sorts of ideas.

Hannibal had to stop himself from crushing Will's slender body against him; he didn't want to be too rough with the young man this time and make him back away. He had to remember to be gentle tonight; if he wasn't he could hinder his plans for the future.

The flowers had been a good idea, he told himself. They had brought Will a few steps closer to him, broken down some of his resistance, made his trust stronger.

But they were only the beginning. He had paved his path well; now he had to begin treading it. He had to garner even more of Will's trust, so that he could be sure there would be little to no resistance when he began taking Will apart, piece by piece.

Ah, that would be lovely indeed. He could hardly wait.

But for now, he could enjoy himself. Kissing Will was a pleasure that he'd been too long denied; how many time had he looked at those lips and imagined them parted under his own? And now, they were, and he planned to enjoy every moment of Will's capitulation.

Will's lips were just as sweet as he'd always known they would be; he would remember this exquisite taste on his tongue for many nights to come. Even when he wasn't with Will, he could still taste the young man, as if Will's kiss had become a part of him.

One hand moved down Will's back to cup his ass gently, squeezing slightly and pulling him closer. He knew that this wouldn't be the night to take Will again, but he could still enjoy touching that beautiful body, and that was what he fully intended to do.

His tongue slowly explored the warmth of Will's mouth, tasting, discovering. The kiss heated his blood, made him want to push Will to the floor and take him, regardless of whatever discomfort it might cause. But no, he had to be gentle. The occasion called for it.

There would be plenty of chances to assert his mastery later.

He broke away from the kiss slowly, moving his hand up Will's back until it rested between the young man's shoulder blades. "I want you naked," he whispered, his gaze riveted on Will's face. "Go into your bedroom and get undressed, Will. I'll be there shortly."

Will nodded, swallowing hard, his blue eyes widening. He didn't speak as he moved away from Hannibal, stumbling slightly, as though he found it hard to stand upright.

Hannibal smiled as Will made his way out of the room, turning to the bouquets of flowers. That kiss had been incendiary, and it had told him exactly what he wanted to do next. The flowers would be put to good use -- and by the next morning, Will would be more his than ever.

Force of Habit

Chapter Summary

Hannibal considers his plans for the evening.

Hannibal stood staring after Will for several long moments after the young man had left the room, mulling over the plans he had for the evening.

Maybe this wasn't the right time to assert his mastery over Will. He had intended to start that tonight, but now, he wasn't so sure that he wanted to continue along that path. It might be better to save that for later, when Will had learned to trust him more.

Was he moving too quickly? Should he abandon tonight's plans?

For a moment, he was almost tempted to do so, to simply leave a note for Will and walk out of the house. But that wasn't what he wanted to do; he wanted to go upstairs to Will's bedroom and further his plans, to take Will into an erotic world that he'd never seen before.

He had no intention of taking Will tonight; he didn't even intend to remove any of his own clothes. But there were a great many things he could do to Will's lovely body that didn't require penetration, things that would have the young man writhing and screaming his name.

He intended to do at least a few of them tonight, to move Will further along the path of trust. And as an added bonus, he would enjoy himself greatly.

Hannibal stood there, contemplating his plans for the evening as he reached into his pocket and fingered the silk scarves he'd brought with him. He had intended to use them for a very specific purpose, but now, he had to wonder if he would need them.

It might be better to proceed more slowly.

He could be a patient man when he needed to be, but his patience was being sorely tested. He wanted Will Graham more than he had thought possible; it was hard to hold himself back. He wasn't ready for the final denouement yet; this was something different.

He wasn't in a rush to make Will a victim. That wasn't it at all. No, he was in a hurry to bring Will closer to him, to enjoy breaking him and then putting him back together. He'd never really tried anything this elaborate before, and he was eager to see how it would work.

But then, he had never been as mesmerized by anyone before. He had never *wanted* anyone like this, with a raw desire that was almost painful.

Will was turning all of his plans upside down, and for some reason, that fact didn't anger him.

Usually, he would push those thoughts aside, and go ahead with his plans. He might even decide that this wasn't worth pursuing, and Will would be dead tonight. But there was something about this young man that gave him pause, something that he couldn't quite put his finger on.

It was his habit not to question himself, but Will made those questions stand out foremost in his mind. Maybe it was simply because they were so much alike.

He'd never met anyone like Will Graham; not only did this young man make him feel a desire unlike any he'd ever known, but he thought that for the first time in his life, he had met someone who could *understand* him, someone who could accept him.

Ah, the things they could do together ....

No, that wasn't entirely true. He was focused on the things he could do to Will; he had no intention of letting the other man have the upper hand. *He* was the one in control; Will would simply have to accept that if this relationship was to go on.

Perhaps it was a bad habit to always want that control, Hannibal thought with a wry smile. But it was a habit that he wasn't going to renounce.

He had never let anyone else take control of him, and no one ever would. He had learned the hard way how to stay in control, and he had no intention of giving it up. If Will tried to reach for that control, he would quickly discover that it was out of his reach.

Hannibal frowned at that thought, knowing that if Will tried to take control in any way, then he would have to be punished for the attempt.

He really didn't want to do that. He had no wish to damage Will.

Maybe it would be a good idea to use those scarves tonight, to show Will that he was in no way going to be permitted to have any control in this relationship. If he knew that right from the start, it would keep him from reaching for any sort of control later on.

Was it only force of habit that kept him from letting anyone else have any sort of control, or was it something of a necessity? Hannibal couldn't decide.

He wanted to believe that it was the latter, of course. But there was something seductive about the idea of giving Will at least a bit of control, something that he found oddly appealing. It might happen sometime in the future, but he wasn't sure of that.

He would simply have to see how things went tonight, and in their next few encounters. Maybe he could afford to give Will some measure of control, just to let the young man have a taste of it, to feel that he was an equal in their strange relationship.

Of course, he would never be an equal partner. He couldn't be.

In the long run, Will *would* be a victim. Hannibal had been sure of that from the first moment they'd met, from the first stirrings of desire that he'd felt for Will. It didn't matter what transpired between them until then; Will was meant to be his victim.

Still, it would be interesting to see what he would do with a bit of control. Perhaps he even though that he retained some of that control already.

Hannibal smiled at that thought, shaking his head. Will had no control in this relationship, no matter what he might think. If he deluded himself in that respect, then he could keep doing so -- but it wold be a very rude awakening for him when he discovered otherwise.

Let Will think that, if he wanted to. It was another bad habit of his, Hannibal mused. He had always let his victims feel as though they retained some semblance of control over their destinies. And of course, they had always been wrong -- just as Will would be.

Will Graham would discover that, in the end, he'd never had any control in their relationship. And that was exactly how Hannibal wanted him to feel.

He reached into his coat pocket, pulling out the silken scarves, weighing them in his hands. Yes, he would use these tonight. He knew just what to do with them.

And Will would enjoy everything he did -- whether he wanted to or not.

Will was addicted to him already; he was positive of that. Will needed him much more than he needed Will -- he had become a bad habit for Will, one that the young man kept coming back to over and over again, against his better judgement. And that pleased him.

Maybe at some point, it would only be force of habit that kept Will coming back to him. But he *would* come back. It would be an impossible habit to break.

He would start ingraining that habit within Will tonight.

Hannibal smiled as he moved towards the bouquets of flowers, picking and choosing from them until he had a small handful. He knew just what he intended to do with these lovely blooms -- though even their beauty didn't compare to the young man who was waiting for him upstairs.

He couldn't hold back a smile of pleasure as he headed for the stairs, the scarves in one hand, flowers in the other. He knew exactly what to do with both of them.

Burning For You

Chapter Summary

> Will doesn't know just what Hannibal plans for him, but he knows that his surrender is inevitable.

Will took a deep breath as he looked at himself in the mirror, running a hand through his hair. He didn't think he'd ever been so nervous in his life.

How was he going to tell Hannibal that there was no way they could have sex tonight? If Hannibal wanted that, then he knew he couldn't say no. He simply didn't have the willpower to deny the other man anything he might want, even if it would cause him pain.

He couldn't say no. He just couldn't.

With anyone else, "no" would come easily to his lips, Will reflected wryly. Then again, with anyone else, this situation wouldn't even exist. Hannibal was the only person he wanted to be with, the only person he wanted to even think about being in a relationship with.

He'd fallen hard, that was for sure. And now that he'd fallen, he had no idea of how he was going to pick himself back up when this was all over.

Because it *would* be over at some point, he thought with a soft sigh as he moved towards the bed and lay down, stretching his lean body out on top of the covers. Hannibal wouldn't want him forever. This was just a dream that couldn't possibly come true for long.

Will closed his eyes, trying to push those thoughts to the back of his mind. He should be enjoying his time with Hannibal in the present, not worrying about what the future would bring. Whatever happened, he couldn't change it. He would just have to accept it, and move on.

"Ah, I see you did as I told you."

Will's eyes flew open at the sound of Hannibal's voice; he raised himself up on his elbows, blinking as he took in the sight of Hannibal standing in his bedroom doorway.

"No need for you to get up," Hannibal said softly, moving into the room and closing the door behind him. Will closed his mouth on the words he'd been about to say; he was going to tell Hannibal to shut the door to keep the dogs from bounding into the room.

Somehow, Hannibal seemed to know what he was thinking. It was an odd feeling, to know that someone could be inside *his* head, when he spent so much time inside other people's minds.

Will didn't know if that feeling was exhilarating or frightening; maybe it was a little bit of both. He had never known anyone who could get inside his head; Hannibal was the only person who seemed to have that power. Maybe that was the basis of their attraction.

Or maybe they had just lusted after each other at first sight.

It didn't really matter to him *why* he wanted Hannibal so badly; it was enough for him that he did. He didn't want to question that need; it was enough that it existed.

He was already burning for Hannibal, and the other man hadn't even touched him yet. He was still standing halfway across the room, his gaze moving up and down Will's nude body, the hunger in that gaze plain for Will to see. It was as though he was being devoured on the spot.

For a moment, just a moment, he wanted to cover himself, to hide his body from that hungry gaze. But the moment passed in the blink of an eye.

Will raised his chin defiantly, leaning back against the pillows, his intense blue gaze meeting Hannibal's. He felt braver than he ever had before, as though he was daring the other man to look at his naked body, daring Hannibal to take what he wanted.

It didn't occur to him that Hannibal might do just that.

Hannibal approached the bed, sitting down on the edge and leaning over Will, making him shrink back a bit against the pillow. He had no idea why he was backing away from Hannibal; after all, this new closeness they had between them was what he'd always wanted.

But that look in Hannibal's eyes, that fierce, hungry look, frightened him for just a moment. He could read what was in the depths of those eyes -- and for just a few seconds, he felt that Hannibal didn't see him as a lover, as person, but as an *object*.

The look was gone within a second; it had been so brief that Will was sure he'd imagined it. But for just a moment, that look had sent a trickle of fear down his spine.

"You don't have to worry," Hannibal murmured, a small smile quirking the corners of his mouth. "I'm not going to take you tonight, Will. You're far too sore for it to be pleasurable for either of us. Pain isn't my objective. But there are so many other things we can do."

Will nodded slowly, almost reluctantly. Why was it that he suddenly wasn't sure if he wanted Hannibal here, in his bedroom, his one place of sanctuary?

There was no reason to feel that Hannibal might wish him harm.

Of all the people in the world who could want to hurt him, Hannibal wouldn't be on that list. They were friends, colleagues, and now, they were something more. Hannibal wasn't here to hurt him; he was here to further what they had already started.

"I know there's a lot we can do," he managed to say, trying to stop his voice from trembling. "I'm just kind of freaked out that you're here, in my house. I'm used to being .... alone." He swallowed hard, wondering if that sounded ridiculous.

After all, he and Hannibal were involved now. It wasn't as though he could expect to be alone all the time, or only to see Hannibal at the other man's house.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, looking amused. "Would you like me to leave?" He reached out to trace a gentle fingertip from Will's jaw down his throat to his chest, circling one puckered nipple, then the other. "Your body seems to be saying something entirely different."

Slowly, Will shook his head. "No, I don't want you to leave. I want you to ...." He swallowed again, taking a deep breath before he could speak. "I want you to show me all those thing we could do. You've got me curious about just what you have in mind."

"Ah, then I will show you, sweet William," Hannibal whispered, leaning so close to Will that their lips were almost touching. "All of those things, and more."

Will's pulse leaped as Hannibal's finger moved down his body to swirl around his navel, then lower, tracing a pattern on his hip. He wanted to moan aloud, but his throat felt closed.

Whatever Hannibal intended to do, he would give himself over to it.

He really had no other choice. Hannibal had someone taken control of his desires, of his body at the very least -- and maybe even of his soul. He didn't want to admit that anyone could have such an effect on him, but there it was. Hannibal had taken him over.

He was burning for Hannibal's touch, for the feel of those hands and lips on his body. And to his surprise, he felt no shame whatsoever.

There was no turning back now. He had to accept whatever Hannibal had planned for this night, and for any night afterwards. He was hopelessly lost, even though he hated to admit it. He was burning for Hannibal; not just his body, but his soul as well.

Will closed his eyes and spread his arms out in a gesture of surrender.

The Art of Seduction

Chapter Summary

> Will has never thought that flowers could be erotic. He discovers just how wrong he is about that.

Will stared up at Hannibal, unwilling to look away. If he did, then he would be backing down, and he wasn't going to do that. He wasn't going to be intimidated by this man, even though there were times when he *did* feel uneasy around Hannibal.

This was one of those times.

He didn't know why a shiver ran down his spine, why he felt as though he might be making a mistake to put so much trust in this man.

But the moment passed quickly, and Will found himself stretching out and raising his hands above his head, smiling up at Hannibal and feeling, for once, as though he was in control. Hannibal wanted him; he knew that. He would use that desire to his advantage.

"We seem to be on the same wavelength," Hannibal told him, reaching into his pocket and pulling out several silk scarves. The sight of them made Will's smile vanish in an instant; he had an idea of what Hannibal was going to do, and that made him very uneasy.

He didn't like being unable to move; it made him feel too helpless, too constrained. But how was he supposed to tell Hannibal that he didn't want to be tied up?

Hannibal placed a finger on his lips, silencing him even before he could speak.

"Give it a chance, Will," he said softly, his gaze not moving from Will's face. "I promise you, I won't hurt you in any way. Give yourself over to me, to your desires. I can promise that there'll be no pain, only pleasure. By the end of the night, you'll be begging for more."

Will wanted to refute those words; for some reason, he didn't like the confidence behind Hannibal's words. The other man seemed to think that he knew him intimately.

But he did, didn't he? Hannibal knew more about him than people who he'd been acquainted with for far longer; Hannibal had gotten inside his head and peered around in there. Hannibal knew more about what made him tick than anyone else did.

Sometimes, he thought Hannibal might know him better than he knew himself.

That thought was frightening, but he had to admit that it was true. There was no reason for him not to trust this man; they couldn't move forward unless he did.

Slowly, he nodded, his gaze not leaving Hannibal's face. It remained to be seen just how he would react to being tied up, but he was willing to let Hannibal try it. Maybe he'd be able to get past that uneasiness, that fear he'd always had of being bound.

Hannibal smiled, taking one of the silk scarves in his hands and leaning forward. Will closed his eyes, feeling resigned, wondering if he would involuntarily struggle when Hannibal bound his wrists. He hoped not; he didn't want to make Hannibal turn away from him.

But to his surprise, Hannibal didn't immediate bind his wrists. He could feel those soft lips caressing the sensitive skin of first one wrist, then the other, the warmth of Hannibal's tongue on his flesh.

Then the soft silk was wrapping around his wrists, first one and then the other, tying them together before securing them above his head. Will realized that Hannibal had tied the long length of silk to the iron frame of his bed, effectively imprisoning him.

He opened his eyes to find Hannibal gazing down at him, frowning slightly.

"Are you all right?" Hannibal whispered, his gaze steady on Will's face. "Don't worry, Will. Nothing I do to you will be unpleasant. There is an art to seduction, as I intend to show you."

Will swallowed hard, unsure as to just what Hannibal meant. He was definitely at a disadvantage here, even though his ankles weren't tied. It would be easy for Hannibal to hold him down; he was putting a lot of trust in this man to let himself be bound and helpless.

But he had to trust Hannibal. If he didn't, then their relationship was going nowhere.

His mouth was dry, his body taut and tense. He had no idea what Hannibal was going to do -- but he didn't think that he'd find it unpleasant. If it involved Hannibal's hands and mouth, he would definitely enjoy it. He'd been dreaming those hands and that mouth all day.

Will watched as Hannibal picked up the handful of sweet Williams, carefully choosing a flower from among the bunch. He smoothed a finger down one of the petals, then glanced at Will with a smile. "Like velvet," he said softly before leaning forward.

Will closed his eyes as the petals brushed against his cheek, holding back a soft moan. He hadn't known that flowers petals could feel so erotic against his skin.

Maybe it was just because he was tied up, but somehow, those cool, velvety petals almost felt like the touch of Hannibal's fingers as he moved them down Will's cheek to his lips, then down his throat, letting the petals caress his bare skin with a feather-light touch.

Those petals moved lower, down to his, brushing across first one nipple, then the other. Will could feel his body responding, each nipple hardening.

Those petals moved even lower, swirling around his navel.

What else was Hannibal planning to do with those flower petals? Will could feel himself hardening, though he didn't open his eyes to look down at his body. He knew that Hannibal was watching him, taking note of every reaction to all that he was doing.

He didn't need to look at Hannibal to know that he was being observed -- and somehow, the knowledge that Hannibal was watching his reactions made this even more erotic.

The petals moved down again, brushing against the soft flesh of his inner thigh, and this time, he *did* moan aloud, a wordless, soft cry. Hie wrists jerked against the silk scarves, though he knew that it would be impossible to free himself.

Will's hips jerked upwards as those petals brushed against his balls, then moved to his other thigh. This was driving him crazy; he would go mad before it was over.

Either that, or he would have the strongest orgasm he'd ever experienced.

That was what Hannibal intended, wasn't it? This torment was designed to arouse his body to a fever pitch before he came, to ensure that he would be limp and boneless, helpless against anything else that Hannibal might decide to do to him.

He couldn't hold back a gasp when he felt those soft flowers petals at the base of his cock, moving up towards the tip, then swirling around the sensitive head. His hips jerked again, his body tightening; Will knew that he was closer to the edge than Hannibal might want him to be.

He wasn't going to hold himself back. There was no way that he could. If Hannibal kept teasing him with those flowers petals, he was going to come in mere seconds.

There was no way he could tell himself to hold back; the sensations that the soft stroking of the petals against his skin were causing coursed through his body, making him moan again. He was close, so close .... if only Hannibal would slow things down just a little ....

Will cried out Hannibal's name as a flood of pleasure washed over him; he had been so lost in trying to follow what those petals were doing to him that his climax took him by surprise.

He lay there for several long moment,s his chest heaving, not daring to open his eyes. He knew that Hannibal would be looking down at him, that slight smile on his lips.

The smile that said Will had responded just as he'd thought he would.

When he finally did open his eyes, that was exactly what he saw. A flash of irritation went through him, a feeling that quickly disappeared when Hannibal leaned forward to brush his lips against Will's then bowed his head to flick his tongue over one tender nipple.

Was he going to do more? Will wasn't sure that he could deal with that; he already felt drained, his exhausted body incapable of dealing with any more stimulation.

"As I said, seduction is an art," Hannibal whispered as he raised his head from Will's chest. "There are many other things I intend to seduce you with, Will, but tonight was only an entreé. There is much more to come, but you'll have to be patient and wait for it."

With those words, he leaned forward and reached for the knots that bound Will's wrists, freeing him more quickly and easily than Will had thought he could.

He sat up slowly, resisting the urge to chafe his wrists. Being bound hadn't hurt; he hadn't thought about it once those flower petals had started their journey. It had almost felt *natural* to be tied up and helpless, not to be able to move while Hannibal pleasured him.

He'd never have thought he could feel that way before tonight.

Hannibal had broken down a barrier that had been within him for a long time, one that he'd thought he could never get past. Maybe he should thank the other man for that, but now didn't seem like the time. Not when it looked as if Hannibal was getting ready to leave.

"You're not staying?" Will asked, his voice very soft in the quiet of the room. If Hannibal wanted to leave, he wasn't going to ask him to stay. He had too much pride.

He wasn't going to seem needy. That was the last thing Hannibal would want; he wasn't the kind of man who could be drawn to someone who needed him too much. Will knew he would have to shove that need away, to make it seem as though their relationship was just .... casual.

It would be the hardest thing he'd ever done in his entire life.

Hannibal shook his head, smiling as he headed for the door. "No, I'm not," he answered, his voice equally soft. "You've had enough for one night." He paused by the doorway, tilting his head to the side and studying Will intently. "Good night, sweet William. Dream of me."

With those words, he was gone.

Will lay back and listened to the sound of Hannibal's footsteps going down the stairs; he vaguely heard the front door close. The dogs didn't make a sound; they were obviously getting used to Hannibal. He didn't know if that was a good thing or not.

He lay back down, moving the silk scarves out of the way. It was strange that Hannibal had left them there; he probably intended to use them again. Will hoped so.

Just thinking about how expertly Hannibal had seduced him tonight made his heart race in his chest; his body was tightening again at the mere thought of those lips on his skin. He could still feel those soft flower petals on his body, arousing him, making the blood race through his veins.

If that was what it was like to be seduced by Hannibal Lecter, then he wanted more of it. He wanted to drown in that seduction, to sink under those waves of pleasure and never come up for air again.

Nothing that anyone had ever done to him before had been that utterly perfect. He couldn't wait to see what else Hannibal had planned, all of the other ways in which he would be seduced.

He fell asleep with a small smile on his lips, his lover still in his thoughts.

Like Fire To Ice

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal can't help feeling that as he's breaking Will down, Will is doing the same to him.

Hannibal took a deep breath, jamming his hands into his coat pockets. He had driven back to his own house after he'd left Will's, but he felt uneasy, restless. He hadn't been able to make himself go inside and settle down; instead, he was walking the streets.

Such an effect Will Graham had on him.

He hadn't expected that effect to be so strong when he had first made the decision to become involved with the young man. He hadn't known what kind of power Will could wield over him, the power to break down the walls he'd long ago erected around himself.

That ice he'd encased himself in was crumbling, cracking. Like fire to ice, Will was melting those walls at an alarmingly rapid rate.

It was almost frightening to realize that Will had that power. No one else had ever moved him as much as this young man did; he had never desired anyone in the way that he desired Will. Not just as a future victim, but as .... something much, much more.

Did he want to think of himself as Will's lover, and vice versa? That was strange. He had never thought of himself as anyone's lover; even the people he had taken to his bed had always been nothing more than means to an end, a way to satisfy his particular hunger.

But Will .... Will was different. Hannibal sighed, a frown creasing his brow. He might as well start thinking of himself as Will's lover, because that's exactly what he was. He couldn't deny the things they'd done together -- and he wanted to do many, many more.

It wasn't love. It wasn't lust, either. It was something more, something that balanced on a thin wire between those two. He couldn't put a word to it, and he wasn't sure that he wanted to. If he could define how he felt, then part of the exhilaration would be gone.

All he knew was that Will was somehow breaking *him* down, stirring up emotions that he had never thought he was capable of feeling.

He had intended to break Will. This wasn't going as he'd planned; he knew that he was slowly gaining the young man's trust, slowly turning Will in the direction of his choosing. But something was happening to him as well, something that he hadn't planned on.

Will's incandescent fire was slowly making all that he was crumble to the ground.

Clenching his jaw, Hannibal pushed thoughts of Will aside, purposefully striding towards his house. He knew what would calm him down. He needed to replenish his freezer, and it was past time to take what he required. It was time to give Will a new case to occupy his mind.

Chase Temptation

Chapter Summary

Will can't escape from the temptation that Hannibal presents.

Hannibal was licking him. All over.

The sensations flowed through his body like molten lava; it was the most incredible thing he'd ever felt, the most erotic thing anyone had ever done to him. Hannibal had started at his lips, and was making his way slowly down his body, taking his time.

He'd never felt such pleasure, not even when Hannibal was fucking him. He wanted to melt into that pleasure, become one with it, let it completely take him over.

Those lips moved down his stomach, Hannibal's tongue swirling around his navel, making him moan ther other man's name as they moved even lower. His body jerked as those soft lips trailed down his inner thigh; Will knew where they were heading next.

Oh yes, that was it. Those lips were on the head of his cock, right where he wanted them.

Much more of this, and he was going to .... just as the thought entered his mind, Will came with a burst of pleasure that tore a wordless cry from his lips.

With that jolt of pleasure, Will's eyes flew open -- and he realized that he had been *asleep*. It had all been a dream; Hannibal wasn't here, making love to him, fucking him. He was alone in his bed, naked, one hand on his cock.

He had given *himself* that pleasure, while dreaming that it was Hannibal. Will rolled over onto his side, his hand still grasping his flaccid cock. That was the first time he'd had a wet dream since ... well, since forever. He didn't even recall the last one.

How could Hannibal affect him so deeply? No one had ever had that kind of hold over him before, not even the crushes he'd had when he was younger.

Even in his dreams, he was chasing temptation.

It didn't seem possible that he could want someone so badly. It was as though Hannibal was under his skin, flowing through his veins, a part of him that he could never get rid of. Ever since the first time they'd had sex, Will hadn't been able to get him out of his mind.

Hannibal was a temptation that always seemed just out of reach, the forbidden fruit that he knew he shouldn't reach for even though he couldn't help doing so.

Why did he want this man so badly? No one else had ever made him lust after them like this; it was far more than attraction, but he knew that he couldn't call it love. What he felt for Hannibal Lecter could never be summed up in such a simple word.

He wasn't even sure that he believed in love. Love between friends, yes -- but the great romantic love that novelists wrote about and so many songs seemed to celebrate? That wasn't something that he thought could possibly be real.

And it definitely was *not* what he felt for Hannibal. Even if he *did* somehow love the other man in his own strange way, it wasn't the same.

Will groaned, rolling over onto his side and burying his face in the pillow. He didn't want to deal with thoughts like this. Not now.

He didn't want to chase temptation. Not in his life, and not in his dreams.

But Hannibal wasn't giving him a choice. Everywhere he turned, Hannibal was there. Will thought about him all the time, even when he was working. Somehow, Hannibal always managed to enter his thoughts, always lurking around the corners of his mind.

He couldn't get away from those thoughts. Tonight had proven that Hannibal was even with him in his dreams -- and he had to admit that the dream he'd had was very pleasant indeed. It wasn't like his dreams of his lover scared him or made him want to turn away.

No, they only made him want Hannibal even more.

Sighing, he sat up slowly, running a hand through his hair. He was going to have to change the sheets -- that was the most annoying thing about having a wet dream.

But he couldn't argue that the dream hadn't been pleasant. If he closed his eyes, he could still feel Hannibal's warm, wet tongue trailing over his nipples .... down his body to the juncture of his thighs, then sweeping across the sensitive head of his cock ....

Will pushed that thought away before it could fully crystallize in his mind; already he was half-hard at just the thought of Hannibal's mouth and all of the wicked things it could do to him. If he kept thinking about that, he would probably stay in bed all day.

He couldn't do that. He couldn't let his dreams of Hannibal take him over so completely. He couldn't let himself chase temptation *all* the time.

No matter how tempting it might be to do just that.

With a grimace, he got to his feet and stretched, feeling oddly vulnerable without his clothes. He usually slept in boxers and a t-shirt, but he hadn't bothered to get dressed after Hannibal had left last night. He'd felt too sated from that powerful orgasm.

Just thinking of how Hannibal had made him come last night was making him harden again; he'd probably end up jerking off in the shower.

Would that be such a bad thing? He'd often thought that he wasn't really in touch with his own sexuality, and now Hannibal seemed to have brought him out of that shell he'd always inhabited. Maybe chasing temptation wasn't such a bad thing, after all.

As long as that temptation was Hannibal.

Sighing softly, Will headed for the door, pushing thoughts of Hannibal out of his mind. He had to take a shower and get cleaned up; he had a long day ahead of him, and then tonight, he was supposed to have a session with Hannibal. A psychiatric session.

His heart seemed to jump in his chest at the thought. There would be more happening than just the two of them talking, he was sure of it.

He would chase temptation yet again, even though he knew that it would be impossible to ever capture the man he so desperately yearned for.

Still, he would try. There was nothing else he could do. He had to walk down this path, no matter how much he knew that it was in his own best interests to turn away.

It never occurred to him that he might be the one who was captured.

Still Life

Chapter Summary

> Will arrives at Hannibal's for their next psychiatric session -- and makes an unsettling discovery.

Will bounded up the steps to Hannibal's front door, hesitating before he raised his hand to knock. Hannibal was expecting him, of course -- he could simply open the door and go right in, as he was fairly sure that Hannibal hadn't locked the door.

But somehow, that didn't feel right. Even though he was here for a psychiatric session, it felt like more -- and he wanted tonight to be more than just talking.

He wanted Hannibal to take him to bed.

If he was honest with himself, he wanted Hannibal to do everything he'd been doing in that *very* erotic dream he'd had last night. He even -- and this shocked him even as he thought of it -- wanted Hannibal to tie him down while he was being pleasured.

Will blinked, more than a little shocked at himself. Where had that thought come from? He'd never enjoyed the feeling of being bound and helpless before.

But he was finding that Hannibal had the power to change his mind about a lot of things, to keep his senses swirling until he was no longer sure just what he wanted. It was a little frightening, but at the same time, it was exhilarating to let of so many inhibitions.

It was still hard to believe that last night had actually happened, though when he'd come downstairs this morning after his show, the proof had been right there.

The scent of sweet Williams pervaded his house -- and his mind.

When he'd left the house that morning, there had been another bouquet of flowers by the front door -- he could only assume that Hannibal had been there, probably while he was in the shower, and had decided to simply leave the flowers by the door rather than come in.

He'd read the note with a smile, though it hadn't been written in Hannibal's handwriting. *"Sweet scents for the sweet. I'll see you soon, sweet William."*

It didn't matter that Hannibal hadn't written the note; it was enough to know that he'd brought over even more flowers. It almost made what they had seem like an odd kind of courtship; that thought made Will's heart pound, thumping in his chest almost painfully.

What *did* he have with Hannibal? They weren't in love. Even in his wildest dreams, he couldn't make himself think that. It was an odd kind of desire, one that consisted of more lust than emotion -- though some sort of emotion might be gaining ground.

All he knew was that he *needed* Hannibal, in a way that he'd never expected to need anyone. That need wasn't sexual so much as .... emotional.

Will sighed, raising his hand to knock. He had to put these thoughts aside.

He had to act as though he and Hannibal were nothing more than a doctor and a patient, at least for tonight. But that was going to be hard to do when knowing that Hannibal had sent him more flowers -- and had more than likely been thinking about him all day -- made his heart sing.

He shouldn't be this happy. He should be disturbed that he'd let someone get this close to him. He should be backing away, not advancing step by measured step.

In some ways, Hannibal frightened him. He could sense a darkness in the other man; there was something just beneath the surface, something the could sense but not quite touch, something that always made him uneasy when he looked into Hannibal's eyes.

But the man was endlessly fascinating. Even if he'd wanted to, he couldn't back away. Not now. Not when they were becoming so close.

If he backed away now, he'd regret it for the rest of his life.

Why was that? he asked himself. Was he starting to develop stronger feelings for Hannibal than he'd thought he would? He didn't want to say that he was in love; that was ridiculous. Love was much more than what he felt; this had its roots planted firmly in lust.

Lust and fascination, a compulsion to find out more about Hannibal, to uncover those dark secrets that he just *knew* were hidden behind that polished exterior.

He stepped back as Hannibal opened the door, his eyes widening. He'd been lost in his own thoughts, not paying attention to what was going on around him. He seemed to do that more and more lately, as he sank more deeply into the world that Jack had thrust him into.

"Hello, Will," Hannibal said, stepping back to let Will enter the house. "You're a bit early, but that's not a problem. I didn't have any other plans for the evening." He closed the door behind Will, locking it, the sound unnervingly loud in the quiet.

Will didn't know why that lock clicking into place sounded so ominous.

Silently, he followed Hannibal to the office, glancing around him as he did. For some reason, Hannibal's house always reminded him of a painting, a still life that never seemed to change .It was almost like the setting for a play, rather than someone's actual life.

Hannibal waited for him to take a seat before leaning against the desk, studying him, his head tilted to the side. "I think we have a lot to talk about tonight," he said softly, his gaze seeking Will's. "You look as though you're disturbed about something, Will."

How could he tell Hannibal just what he was disturbed about? It wasn't as though either of them wanted to talk about their physical relationship. It wasn't a comfortable subject.

"I-I don't know about that," Will stammered, wishing that he could think of something to say, anything that would ease the tension he felt.

Hannibal was watching him so intently, that slight frown between his brows. And all he could think of when he looked at the other man was how badly he wanted to be in Hannibal's bed, to be naked under him, for the two of them to be physically close with no barriers between them.

It was unnerving. The overwhelming desire he felt was more than a little scary.

"Thanks for the flowers you sent this morning," he managed to say, trying to keep his tone light. "It's not like I needed any more, but it was a nice gesture."

Hannibal's frown grew more pronounced, the room seeming to darken around him. And suddenly Will knew that he'd said the wrong thing, that he'd opened up some new Pandora's box that was going to unleash all kinds of trouble around them.

The room seemed even more like a still life painting, the two of them staring at each other, Will holding his breath and waiting for Hannibal to say something.

"I didn't send you more flowers, Will." The words were quiet, falling into the silence of the room like stones plopping into the smooth, still water of a calm lake, sending out ripples. "Whoever did that, it wasn't me. It seems as though you might have another .... admirer."

Will blinked, thinking of the words that had been written on the card. *"I'll see you soon, sweet William."* Had that been a promise -- or a threat?

If Hannibal hadn't sent those flowers, then who had? Was he being targeted in some way? Did someone *know* about his relationship with Hannibal?

An icy chill trickled down his spine, making him shiver. Suddenly, there was a third figure added to their still life tableau, and he had no idea who it was, or why they were there. Too many questions were suddenly looming large in his mind, blocking out everything else.

Will didn't think he was going to like the answers.

Ready and Willing

Chapter Summary

Hannibal can go from concern to jealousy in the blink of an eye.

"Wh-what do you mean, you didn't send those flowers?" Will stammered, staring at Hannibal, his eyes wide. "If you didn't, then who did? They knew your name for me -- they called me 'sweet William' in the card that came with the flowers."

"Let me see it." Hannibal held out his hand, his voice authoritative. "If they know my little nickname for you, then they could know what we did in your bedroom last night."

Will felt his face grow hot with embarrassment at the thought of anyone having witnessed just what Hannibal had done to him last night -- and his physical reactions.

If anybody had seen that, then they could use their knowledge to blackmail either of them -- or both of them. He didn't want to have to deal with something like that; he wasn't ashamed of his relationship with Hannibal, but he didn't want it to be public knowledge, either.

"Whoever this is, they're a danger to both of us, Will."

He nodded, unable to look at Hannibal. He was right, of course. Whoever this person was, they had both him and Hannibal by the balls, so to speak. But which of them would be hurt more if their relationship was brought into the open? He didn't think it would be him.

This could be used to destroy Hannibal's practice. Having sex with one of his patients was unethical; he could be brought up on charges.

Of course, *he* would never go along with it -- he hadn't been coerced, after all. He wanted Hannibal, wanted him with a fierce desire that only seemed to grow stronger every time they were near each other. This wasn't a case of him being forced into anything he didn't want.

No, he'd been seduced, and he'd been utterly willing.

He didn't want this person, whoever they were, to do anything that could harm Hannibal. Whatever it was they wanted, he'd give it to them, as long as Hannibal wasn't dragged into it.

"If they saw the two of us in my house, then they know that we're involved," Will said slowly, wishing that his brain didn't feel like it had suddenly turned to mush. "They might be planning to blackmail one of us -- or both. But we're not going to know until they make another move."

Hannibal frowned at the note in his hand, perusing it again. "I don't think blackmail is the intent here," he said, looking up at Will again with a worried expression.

"Why not?" Now it was Will's turn to frown. "Why else would they send me that note?"

"Read it again, Will." Hannibal shook his head as he handed the card back to Will, studying the younger man's face. "It doesn't sound as though this person is threatening you. It sounds as though they .... *want* you. In the way that I have you."

For a moment, just a moment, Hannibal's words almost made Will angry. Hannibal didn't "have" him. No one did. He was his own person.

Then the moment passed, and he was reading the note again, trying to view those words in the same way that Hannibal obviously did. Maybe he was right, Will thought, a shudder going through his slender body. Maybe this person wanted him in .... in a sexual way.

He didn't know if the thought frightened him, or made him feel sick. A little bit of both, he decided. He'd never known what it was to have a stalker, but he was starting to feel that he was going to find out just how that felt, up close and personal.

He didn't relish the experience.

What if this person had been watching him for a wile now, and he just hadn't realized it? That thought made him shudder again, this time with distaste. It was creepy to think that someone had been watching him every day, seeing everything he did.

They couldn't see him here, though. There was no way that they could see into Hannibal's house, to know what the two of them had done, twice, here in this room. There was no way they could have seen that portrait that Hannibal had painted of him.

"So you have no idea who this person could be?" Hannibal asked. His voice sounded tight, angry. Will looked up at him, eyes wide, surprised by the tone.

Hannibal was leaning against the edge of his desk, arms crossed over his chest, scowling. "No, I don't," Will answered, shaking his head. "What, do you think I *want* some stranger sending me flowers and knowing about us? I'm not happy about this."

"Of course you're not." Hannibal moved across the room to stand in front of Will, the angry light still in his eyes. "But doesn't it make you feel just the slightest bit .... flattered?"

Will shrugged, feeling uneasy at the question. "Maybe. I don't know."

Hannibal's scowl deepened; in that moment, Will felt like stepping away from him. He looked angry enough to lash out at anything; Will had never seen him like this. But he stood his ground, his blue gaze meeting Hannibal's, his expression defiant.

He gasped when Hannibal reached out to take his face between his hands, leaning close to him and speaking in a low, intense voice.

"You are *mine*, Will. *Mine.* You have been mine from the first moment I touched you. And no one, no matter how much they flatter your ego, is going to take you away from me."

Will didn't have time to tell Hannibal that he didn't *want* to be taken away, that no one else was going to turn his head. Hannibal grasped his wrist, practically pulling him out of the room and towards the stairs that Will knew led up to his bedroom.

He'd never been in that room, but he'd wanted to be. He wanted to be in Hannibal's bed, their bodies joined in passion, pleasure flowing between them.

But not like this. He didn't want Hannibal to take him in anger.

He tried to pull away, but Hannibal held his wrist in too tight a grip. He was literally being dragged up the stairs to Hannibal's bed, and he knew that if they continued on in the state that Hannibal was in, irreparable damage could be done to their budding relationship.

But he didn't dare pull away, not when Hannibal was in this kind of mood. That would only make him angrier, and Will knew that one thing he definitely *didn't* want to see, or be on the receiving end of, was this man's full-blown anger.

"Hannibal --" He began to speak, but the other man pulled him forward, wrapping an arm around his waist and holding him captive, that dark gaze boring into his.

"I'm going to take you, Will," he said, his voice very soft, barely above a whisper, the words echoing in Will's ears as though he'd screamed them. "I'm going to take you in my bed, so you will know that you belong to me and *only* me."

Will could only nod, the words he'd planned to speak vanishing from his mind. He *wanted* this, needed it like he needed air to breathe. He wasn't ashamed of that need.

He wanted to indulge that need to the fullest, lose himself in it.

Maybe this wouldn't end well, but he was committed to seeing it through. He'd let Hannibal bring him up here -- and besides, he had wanted to be in Hannibal's bed. This might not have been the way he'd envisioned that happening, but it was happening nonetheless.

"Go into the bedroom and take your clothes off," Hannibal told him, his voice still very soft, but carrying that unmistakable undertone of command. "I'll join you in a few minutes."

With those words, he released will and moved back down the hallway to the stairs. Will turned, heading for the open door of what had to be Hannibal's bedroom. His heart was racing, thumping so loudly in his chest that he was sure Hannibal could hear it.

This wasn't how he had wanted things to go, but he had no choice other than to accept them. His only other choice was to run away, and he wouldn't do that.

No, he would stand his ground, whatever the cost might be.

Running away would only prove that he was a coward, that he didn't have the courage to reach out for what he wanted. He didn't want Hannibal to see him in that way -- and

moreover, he didn't want to view *himself* in that kind of light.

There had been too many things in his life that he'd run from, either because he was terrified of them, or because he knew that he wouldn't be able to handle them without falling apart. This time, he was going to face whatever might happen, rather than turning away from it.

Will reached for the buttons on his shirt, starting to undo them as quickly as he could. He would be naked before Hannibal returned, ready and willing for whatever came next.

The Ultimate Victory

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is determined to show Will exactly where he belongs -- and who he belongs to.

Hannibal glanced towards the stairs as Will ascended them, knowing that the young man would obey him and do as he was told. He was confident of his hold over Will; he didn't doubt that his angry words would accomplish what a request might not have done.

His hands clenched into fists as he thought of that card in Will's pocket, the proof that someone else had cast their eyes on what belonged to him.

Will was *his*. No one was going to take his boy away from him.

Will Graham *belonged* to him in ways that no one else could even begin to imagine. Will was his, body and soul, and he had no intention of letting anyone come between them. Anyone who dared try would quickly discover that they had made a grave error in judgment.

Will himself had made something of an error if he thought that he could have another admirer. He most definitely could *not*. He was *taken*.

The mere thought of someone else lusting after Will, setting their sights on him and thinking that they could have him if they so chose, made a soft growl form in his throat. He clenched his teeth against it, unwilling to let the sound come out.

He was not one of Will's dogs.

No, he was Will's *master*. He was the man who owned Will Graham, whether or not Will chose to believe that fact. Tonight, he would show Will where he belonged -- and who he belonged to -- in no uncertain terms. There would be no doubts in his mind.

Tgis should have already been done, from the first time they'd been together. But he'd let his softer feelings for Will get in the way of his objective.

He'd foolishly let himself think that Will would come to him of his own volition, that it would be easy to make the young man move in his direction. He had made the error of thinking that Will could be easily manipulated, that he wouldn't pull back.

He would be sure not to make that mistake again.

This other admirer of Will's was trying to take Will away from him -- and that wouldn't be allowed to happen. He *would* have the ultimate victory. He *would* take what he wanted..

Tonight, he would make Will Graham his. There would be no room for doubt as to who Will belonged to -- and who would claim victory over him, as well as over the person who loomed in the background. Will was the prize, and Hannibal intended to win.

There could be only one victor in this game. And it *would* be him.

Lodestar

Chapter Summary

Hannibal finds that he's more drawn to Will than he realized.

Hannibal paused outside the bedroom door, wondering why Will had felt the need to close it. It wasn't as though he hadn't already seen the younger man in the altogether; he hadn't thought that Will would be so shy about revealing the beauty of his body at this point.

There was obviously still much more that he had to learn about Will Graham.

It was time for Will to discover something about *him*. Namely, that he didn't take well to other people attempting to claim that which belonged to him.

He was going to show Will just where he belonged -- and who he belonged to. He had no intention of being kind, or gentle. He wasn't going to *hurt* Will -- that would more than likely only send him fleeing in the opposite direction -- but he was going to be firm.

He hadn't thought this lesson would come this soon in their relationship, but after Will had shown him that card, he'd known that something had to be done. He couldn't allow Will to wander in another direction, to lose sight of what the two of them were building.

Of course, Will didn't know just what their relationship was. He was confused. But he would soon realize that he had no choice but to be here.

Opening the door, he strode into the room, pleased to see that Will was naked and already lying on the bed. Those blue eyes met his own, their intensity almost startling him for a moment. Sometimes he forgot just how mesmerizing Will's eyes could be.

Those eyes were his lodestar, leading him on and drawing him closer.

But he didn't intend to look into Will's eyes tonight. No, that would inspire softer feelings, take his mind away from the lesson he wanted to teach his boy.

There would be no gentleness between them tonight. They would be pupil and teacher -- and this might be a hard lesson for Will to learn. But learn it he would; he had to be taught in no uncertain terms that he belonged to Hannibal, and to no one else.

There was no room for another person in their equation, and Will had to realize that. He wouldn't be allowed to even consider that he could be desired by anyone else.

Will had to belong to him completely, body and soul. Tonight would be a huge step towards that objective.

The look in those eyes was apprehensive; that was good. He wanted Will to be on the edge of his nerves tonight; it would be yet another way to begin breaking him down, to make him realize that his will was subject to the man who commanded him.

Will was not free, and he couldn't be allowed to think that he was. He hadn't been free since the day that they had first met, and Hannibal had looked into the intensity of those deep sapphire eyes for the first time. It was then that he had decided Will would be his.

Will *was* his. He always would be.

"Turn over," Hannibal told Will tersely, his voice clipped. He wasn't going to look into those eyes, not tonight. He was going to take Will, to take his own pleasure. He was going to show Will that he was the stronger one, the dominant one, and that he must be obeyed.

Will stared up at him, those blue eyes wide, before hesitantly obeying his command. Hannibal couldn't hold back a smile of satisfaction; Will was already learning that he wasn't to be denied.

It remained to be seen just what else he would have to teach Will; there were some thing that the young man seemed to know instinctively. Maybe they really *had* been made for each other, Hannibal thought as he reached for one of Will's thin wrists.

He could feel the shock go through Will's body when he clicked the handcuff on one bedpost around his wrist; Will obviously hadn't taken the time to look around and see those cuffs. Nor did he know that they were new additions to the décor, put there specificially for him.

Hannibal cuffed his other wrist, then sat back on his heels.

Will was stretched out before him, tugging slightly at the cuffs, even though he had to know that he couldn't escape. Hannibal trailed his fingertips down the younger man's back, admiring the smooth line of his body. He had to resist the urge to dig his nails into flesh; this wasn't the time.

"Spread your legs, Will," he murmured, keeping his voice low-pitched. He didn't want to frighten Will, didn't want him to feel that he had to struggle. This would be a lesson, but he didn't want it to be a particularly painful one. That would be detrimental to his purpose.

"Hannibal, don't," Will begged, trying to turn his head to look at the man behind him. "Don't make me hate you. Don't do this in anger."

Hannibal didn't answer; he simply reached for the tube of lubricant he'd readied on the small table by his bed. He didn't speak as he popped the cap and lubed his fingers, then leaned forward and slipped one finger, then a second, inside Will, spreading and scissoring them.

Within seconds, Will was moaning and squirming under him, muscles bunching and then releasing. He could watch this all night, Hannibal thought to himself, but it was time for him to take his own pleasure, to let Will know who was in control here.

It would be pleasurable for both of them, of course. He would see to that.

He replaced the lube on the table, then leaned forward and grasped Will's shoulders. The young man stilled under him; Hannibal could almost feel the electricity in the air, as though a storm was about to break. They were both waiting for what would come next.

He closed his eyes, thrusting his hips forward, almost gasping as he was enveloped in the tight heat of Will's body. It was like being enclosed in a velvet vise.

How was it possible for Will to still be this tight? He would have thought that Will's body would have learned to relax by now; the two of them had been intimate more than once. But perhaps Will's body was as reluctant as his mind was to accept anyone into his life.

Hannibal knew that feeling all too well -- but he had brought Will into his life, so it was only right that he be accepted into Will's life just as he was into his body.

His hands moved up Will's arms to grasp his hands, twining their fingers together as he continued to thrust. He didn't want to make a sound, but he couldn't hold back the small moans of pleasure that escaped his lips. Nothing had ever felt this .... this *good*.

Even killing, with the rush of power and control it gave him, couldn't equal the pleasure that he felt when he was deep inside Will Graham's body. This was where he belonged; being inside Will was like coming home, to the place where he was meant to be.

They belonged together. Will was his lodestar, drawing him in.

Just as this beautiful body that he was now thrusting into drew him in, intoxicated him in, made him want Will more each time they coupled. He could spend all of his life with this beautiful boy -- that is, until it was time for Will to die, which was their inevitable end.

But he would give Will a glorious, beautiful death, one that would go down in history. That was a promise that he had silently made to them both, and one that he would keep.

Hannibal could feel his orgasm starting to uncoil within him, stronger than he could ever remember any other climax being. One more thrust .... then another ... and he couldn't hold back the soft cry that fell from his lips, not realizing that it was Will's name he cried out.

Will had cried out as well, but unlike Hannibal's, his cry was wordless, as though he was incapable of making any words formulate in his mind. His body tightened one last time around Hannibal's cock, then he relaxed, going limp and boneless.

Hannibal almost wanted to slide his arms around Will, to tell him that everything would be all right.

But no, he couldn't do that. This was a lesson for Will to learn, something that he had to be taught. He had to know that he had no choices in this relationship, that he had no control. And if being a bit rough with him was the way to impart that lesson, then so be it.

Hannibal slowly pulled out of Will, sitting up and gazing down at the young man in front of him. He didn't want to look into Will's eyes yet, to see what might be reflected there.

Will looked inexpressibly beautiful, lying there bound and helpless. A part of him wanted to lean down and press a kiss to the vulnerable nape of his neck; another part wanted to take him again, as soon as possible, only more roughly the second time.

No, he wouldn't do that. But he would savor the fact that he could if he chose to.

"I think that's enough for tonight," he said softly, reaching for the key to the handcuffs and releasing Will's right wrist, then his left. "But remember this, Will. You belong to me."

Will nodded as he sat up slowly, chafing his wrists and not looking up at Hannibal. It was as though he didn't want their eyes to meet, as though he was ashamed that they would reflect the pleasure he'd felt. That wasn't entirely satisfactory, but it would do for now.

Hannibal stood and reached for his robe, shrugging into it and pulling it around his nudity. He was done with Will for the night. It was time to put some distance between them.

"Go home, Will," he said, his voice more gentle than he'd intended for it to be. "There'll be no session tonight. We can talk tomorrow night. I think we both need a bit of time apart for the moment."

With those words, he turned and walked out of the room.

He hadn't expected to see that flash of hurt in Will's gaze as the young man had looked up at him. He hadn't meant to glance back just before he closed the door. But he had, and there was a part of him that felt a small stirring of regret at what he'd done tonight.

He shouldn't have looked back. Because those sapphire eyes still drew him in, made him want to take Will in his arms and somehow comfort him.

No matter how much he tried to distance himself, Will would always be his lodestar. He might as well accept that fact, Hannibal thought with a sigh as he made his way to the kitchen. He should pull back. He shouldn't let himself move any closer to Will.

But he was caught. There was no escape for him, either.

Somehow, the thought didn't seem as unsettling as it probably should be.

Take Another View

Chapter Summary

> Will comes to the decision that he needs to make changes in his life, and decide just what his priorities are.

Will glanced towards the closed door with a sigh, wishing that he could have thought of something to say to keep Hannibal in the room. They needed to talk, and he knew that the longer they put it off, the more awkward that talk would be, at least for him.

Distance only seemed to make his tongue get tied in more knots than usual. And he was already so tongue-tied that he didn't think he could speak even if he wanted to.

Not that it would do any good, as Hannibal had already left. Once again, he'd screwed up the chance for any kind of meaningful discourse between them.

He seemed to have a bad habit of doing that.

He stood up slowly, reaching for his jeans where he'd left them on the floor near the bed. He hadn't had time to fold up his clothes when he'd taken them off; Hannibal had come to him more quickly than he'd thought he would. There hadn't seemed to be much time for anything.

He wanted the two of them to be able to sit down and talk, to discuss just what their relationship was and what they meant to each other. But again, there didn't seem to be time for that, either. All of their moments so far had felt as though they were stolen, snatched out of thin air.

This wasn't the way he wanted his relationship with Hannibal to be.

He wanted the two of them to have something that at least approached normalcy. It was strange enough to realize that he was involved with his psychiatrist.

Will slowly pulled his jeans on, then reached for his shirt, shrugging into it and reaching for the buttons. As he did so, he turned towards the far side of the room, searching for a mirror, hoping that he wouldn't see that he looked as though he'd just been thoroughly fucked.

His eyes widened as they rested on the painting of him that Hannibal had done, in all its glory, hanging next to the mirror. He hadn't expected to see it here.

But really, where else would Hannibal put it? In his office? In his house, where it could be seen?

No, he wasn't the kind of man to display something like this so ostentatiously. It made sense that he would have it here in his bedroom, where he could look at it whenever he chose to and know that it was free from any prying, judgmental eyes.

It really was a beautiful painting; he had to admit that. Somehow, Hannibal had managed to capture him in one of those rare moments when he felt as peace with who he was.

The man in the painting was at ease with his body and with his sexuality, comfortable in his own skin. Will had never felt like that -- he was always stumbling over his own feet, awkward, feeling as though he was at odds with his own body, fumbling along in the dark.

He'd thought that feeling would go away as he grew older, but it never had. In some ways, it had only become more pronounced; he was never really comfortable with himself, and because of that, he never felt comfortable with other people, either.

The only person he truly felt comfortable around was .... Hannibal.

Will felt a smile tug at the corners of his life at that realization. Most people were distinctly nervous around Hannibal, but he never had been. There was something about the other man that felt .... well, comforting, in an odd way. He'd never really thought about it.

And, of course, there was the desire that flowed so freely between them, a desire that he'd never felt for anyone else. A desire that was often overwhelming.

Will frowned, stepping closer to the painting and studying it. He'd never noticed before just how Hannibal had painted him -- completely smooth, as though his body was a marble statue. There were no dark curls at the apex of his thighs, no shadows of hair on his legs.

Was that how Hannibal saw him? As being smooth and .... perfect?

Hannibal knew better than that. They'd been intimate; Hannibal was aware of all the imperfections of his body. Yet he'd painted him as being something of a Greek god -- celebrating his masculinity and his sexuality, his body on display, comfortable with himself and his surroundings.

Maybe it was time for him to take another view of himself -- and of the way that Hannibal saw him. If this was what Hannibal wanted, maybe it was up to him to make some changes, to try to meet the other man halfway and give him what he seemed to desire.

It might be time to take another view of everything about himself, really. If he was going to be with Hannibal, he couldn't keep feeling as though he was unworthy.

That wasn't the kind of attitude a man like Hannibal would put up with for long. He would become bored with it, and he would seek out someone who was more confident, someone who didn't question every step he took, someone who was a perfect match for him.

He might not be that perfect match, but he was sure as hell going to try to be.

Will finished buttoning his shirt, running a hand though his hair and wishing that he had a brush. He looked disheveled, as though .... well, as though he'd just had a tumble in bed.

Which he had. And which, against all odds, he'd actually enjoyed.

He had never thought that he would like being held down, feeling helpless to stop whatever was being done to him. It wasn't something he had wanted, but somehow, when it was Hannibal holding him down and doing things to him, it wasn't as frightening.

It had been an odd feeling, somewhere between pleasure and pain, between fear and euphoria. All of those sensations had swirled together, until he couldn't tell one from the other.

He wanted to feel that again. But the next time Hannibal tied him down, he wanted it to be with his consent, so he could prepare himself for what was coming.

Will had to laugh ruefully at that thought, shaking his head as he moved toward the door. Hannibal wasn't going to allow him to take control, not in any way. If there was anything this evening had shown him loud and clear, it was that one simple fact.

He would either have to get used to it and learn to like it, or he would have to back away.

No, he couldn't do that. Hannibal had become to important a part of his life to back away now, when their relationship was starting to take a turn in the direction that Will wanted it to go. If that relationship came with a few conditions, well, he could live with that.

Maybe it wouldn't be easy, but he would deal with it one step at a time. After all, Hannibal wouldn't hurt him. That was one thing he knew with absolute certainty.

It was time to take another view of his entire life, to evaluate what was working in it and what wasn't. It was past time for him to make some changes, to decide what direction he wanted his life to take, to discard the old and useless and turn towards the future.

Hannibal was his future. Hannibal was the fixed point that he knew he would always gravitate towards; nothing was ever going to change that fact.

Will glanced at the painting once more before he opened the door, letting his gaze roam over it. The subject matter could still bring a blush to his cheeks, but if that was the way Hannibal saw him, then he would accept it -- and be proud.

He had nothing to be ashamed of, after all. Hannibal had made him look beautiful -- and desirable. And there was an emotion behind that depiction, an emotion that almost seemed ... loving.

Will shook his head. He didn't want to think along those lines. Not yet.

He didn't want to decode whatever emotion Hannibal had felt when he'd painted. He wasn't sure if he was ready to accept being loved, if that was indeed the emotion at play here. It would make him take yet another view of his life, and the relationship he was getting into.

He wasn't ready for that intense scrutiny. Not now. But he *was* going to start making changes in his life. Positive ones. Starting today.

Will walked out of Hannibal's bedroom without looking back, descending the stairs and heading directly for the front door. He didn't see Hannibal again as he left -- but the other man saw him, his dark gaze following Will outside and watching intently as he drove away.

Sweeter Than Candy

Chapter Summary

Will has a surprise for Hannibal during their next psychiatric session.

Will sat in the chair across from Hannibal, fidgeting in his seat. He wasn't exactly comfortable, but he didn't know how to turn the conversation around to just *why* he wasn't, and to finally be able to show Hannibal the surprise he had for him.

It hadn't occurred to him that Hannibal might not like what he'd done until now; what if it had been entirely the wrong thing? What if it made Hannibal back off?

He'd cross that bridge when he came to it. Right now, he was just desperate to find a way to bring their current conversation around to why he was so nervous and fidgety tonight.

"Will, you usually don't have a problem with sitting still."

"I know," he answered before he thought about what he wanted to say. "I did something today that's making me a little uncomfortable. Hard to sit still when --" He closed his mouth with an audible snap of his teeth, standing up and reaching for the buttons on his shirt.

"Maybe I should just show you." He took a step back, watching as Hannibal raised an eyebrow, his curiosity obviously piqued. "Close your eyes," Will told him, a slight smile tugging at the corners of his lips. "I want this to be a surprise."

"I hope you didn't tattoo my name somewhere on your body," Hannibal replied as he did as Will asked and closed his eyes, leaning back in his chair. "That's hardly appropriate."

"Nope, nothing like that." As he undid each button on his shirt, then shrugged it off his shoulders, Will began to wonder if this had been a good idea.

What was Hannibal going to think? Would be he intrigued -- or repulsed?

Well, he was in too deep to turn back now. He'd set this in motion, and he had no choice but to see it through, even if he was starting to have some serious misgivings. What if he'd been wrong about how Hannibal saw him? He could have been completely off base.

If he had been, then he would have to accept it, and hope that what he'd done wouldn't make Hannibal back away from him. In for a penny, in for a pound, as the saying went.

Will unzipped his jeans, pushing them down his legs and stepping out of them. Taking a deep breath, he spread his hands out to his sides and closed his eyes for a moment, readying

himself for whatever he might see reflected in Hannibal's gaze. "Okay, you can open your eyes now."

He almost didn't want to look at Hannibal, didn't want to see the expression on his lover's face when he saw what Will had done.

"Well." Hannibal's lips curved into a smile, his head tilted to the side. "This is a pleasant surprise."

Will felt a rush of relief flow through his body; so he hadn't been wrong. He had thought that Hannibal wanted to see his body as he'd painted it, with nothing to get in his way. To that effect, he'd gone out to a salon today and had his body waxed.

Not just the areas that were normally done, either; he'd had his legs waxed, as well. He'd hesitated about that, but at the last minute, he'd decided that since he'd gone so far already, what could be the harm? If Hannibal liked him this way, so much the better.

"So ... you like it?" he prompted, needing an answer from the man sitting in front of him.

"Indeed I do." Hannibal got to his feet, an odd, wolfish smile curving his lips. "And I intend to show you just how much I like it. Right now."

Will realized that Hannibal was backing him towards the couch, the very couch that they'd been intimate on only a few days before. That couch was becoming too familiar to him, a place where he felt more comfortable than he had any right to be.

He let Hannibal push him down onto the cushions, looking up at the other man. He wasn't sure exactly what Hannibal intended to do; he seemed in no hurry to remove his clothes. Instead, he looked down at Will with that same wolfish smile, his dark eyes intent.

Then he knelt in front of Will, hands moving to gently spread his thighs apart. Only then did it dawn on Will just what his lover proposed to do to him.

He leaned back, closing his eyes, waiting for the inevitable pleasure of Hannibal's mouth on his flesh. He hadn't expected this, but he wasn't going to turn away from it. He'd been dreaming of it happening again ever since the first time they'd been on this couch.

Now it was finally happening, and he could get lost in the pleasure.

Hannibal's tongue flicked over the sensitive head of his cock, eliciting a soft gasp from him. Had anyone's mouth ever been this soft, this warm? No, not warm. *Hot*, as hot as molten lava pouring over his skin, as hot as an incandescent flame touching him, but not burning.

Will cried out sharply as Hannibal's mouth moved lower, deep-throating his cock much more quickly than he had expected. Hannibal seemed to have no gag reflex at all; Will couldn't believe how good he was at this. But then, Hannibal was good at everything ....

His fingers scrabbled for purchase on the smooth cushions of the couch; he finally clenched his hands into fists, his nails digging into his palms. His hips rose upwards, but Hannibal's hands held him down, forcing him to be still, not allowing him to move.

He wanted to squirm, to buck his hips against the delicious warmth of that mouth that he so desperately wanted to thrust into. But he was held in place, unable to move.

Will's head fell back, his mouth opening in a soundless scream. This was all happening too quickly; he was being brought to orgasm before he was ready --

And with that thought, he came in a shuddering rush.

He didn't want to open his eyes; he only wanted to sit here with his head thrown back and his body still reeling from what Hannibal had just done to him. He wanted to revel in the sensations for a while longer, but he knew that he wouldn't be allowed to.

Hannibal's mouth was still working at him, but it was becoming more pain than pleasure now; he was far too tender for such ministrations, but he couldn't pull away.

As though he realized that Will wasn't awash in pleasurable sensations any longer, Hannibal let Will's cock slide slowly from his mouth, sitting back on his heels and wiping the back of his hand across his mouth. Will watched him, a little shocked by that gesture.

That just didn't seem like something Hannibal would do. It felt entirely out of character.

Yet he'd done it, and now he was sitting there on his heels, that small, enigmatic smile back on his lips, those eyes watching Will as though Hannibal was waiting for his reaction.

"Th-that felt amazing," he managed to say, the words coming out on a gasp for breath. "I didn't expect it, but I think we've both been doing a lot of things lately that neither one of us expected. So I guess this means you liked my little surprise."

"Oh, yes, I like it very much," Hannibal murmured, reaching out a hand to trail his fingers down Will's inner thigh. "You're very sweet, Will. Sweeter than candy. And I'll be the first to admit that when it comes to you, I have a definite sweet tooth."

Those words made Will blush; he hadn't thought of himself in that way, but apparently Hannibal did. It was a little disconcerting to know that he was viewed in such terms, but this man was his lover. He saw Will in ways that no one else possibly could.

He was surprised that Hannibal was still kneeling in front of him; this wasn't a man who was used to being in a kind of subservient pose. Will knew that as surely as he knew his own name.

As though he read Will's thoughts, Hannibal rose to his feet, raising an eyebrow.

"As surprises go, this was a very pleasant one," he said, holding out his hand to help Will up. "But we both have things to do tomorrow, and I think that we both probably need to get a bit of rest. You should go, Will. I'll see you tomorrow night. Not for a session."

Will blinked as he looked up at Hannibal, suddenly feeling drained. He had expected his lover to want him to spend the night here, and Hannibal was sending him home?

"But --" He was silenced by Hannibal's finger against his lips.

"You're not in the most comfortable state at the moment, Will," Hannibal whispered, his gaze intent on Will's face. "As lovely as this surprise is, you need a bit of time to recover. So I'm giving you tonight. But tomorrow night, you'll be mine. Depend on it."

Will nodded mutely, unable to say a word. He watched as Hannibal left the room, ascending the stairs without a backward glance, before he rose and began to pick up his clothes.

It only took him a few moments to dress, then he slowly moved towards the front door, reluctant to leave, though he knew that he had no other choice. He wanted to stay, to follow Hannibal up the stairs and into his bedroom, but that wasn't a good idea.

He didn't want to find out what the consequences of pushing Hannibal too far would be.

He had somehow thought that doing this would give him some modicum of control, a bit of an upper hand in their relationship, at least for a while. But it hadn't. Will didn't know if he was annoyed or relieved that his abortive bid for control had failed.

He glanced towards the stairs once more before he sighed and opened the door, closing it behind him as he slipped outside, his footsteps dragging, not daring to look at the light in the bedroom window.

Trouble Having You Near

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is disturbed by the effect Will has on him.

Hannibal stood at his bedroom window and watched as the tail lights of Will's car turned a corner, only letting the curtain fall and turning away when they had disappeared for good. Will ws on his way back to Wolf Trap for the evening, and that was as it should be.

But he wanted to call Will back. Oh, how he wanted to.

He had truly appreciated Will's little surprise -- more than he'd thought he would. When he had opened his eyes, he had felt an odd kind of pleasure seep through him.

So, Will had taken the hint that the picture had been intended to give him, and he'd run with it. That proved that the two of them were connected on some primal level, that he could manage to communicate his thoughts and desires to Will without the aid of words.

That was as it should be. A good submissive should be sensitive to his dominant's desires; he should be able to know what was wanted without benefit of being told outright.

He hadn't thought that Will would catch on to his meaning so quickly.

He'd told himself over and over that he was being too subtle, that it would take more than a painting for Will to understand what he was meant to do. Hannibal had thought that he would have to throw out a few hints, but no, Will had grasped his meaning clearly.

Did Will realize that was what the painting had meant to convey, that he was supposed to follow the line of Hannibal's fantasy back to where it began? If he did, then all well and good. If he didn't, then that really wasn't a problem. He would understand that, in time.

It had been so hard to send Will home; even now, the young man's taste was still in his mouth, and he found himself craving more, as though he would never be sated.

But tonight wasn't the night for that. He'd already had a tantalizing taste of what it would be like to lick that delectable young body with nothing to get in his way; he looked forward to doing just that tomorrow night, to taking Will up to heights that he'd never before experienced.

Knowing that it wasn't the right time didn't stop him from *wanting*.

And he wasn't the type of man to deny himself whatever he desired.

But tonight, he would -- for the good of his plans for the future. He had so much that he intended to teach Will; he was going to groom this beautiful boy to be exactly what Hannibal wanted of him before he gave Will the most beautiful, glorious death he could contrive to give.

That was far, far into the future, Hannibal assured himself. He had no wish to be deprived of Will any time soon, not until he had enjoyed his submissive to the fullest.

Will might not realize yet that he *was* a submissive, but he would. Even if he wasn't told outright, he was a smart boy. He would figure it out -- and it wouldn't take him long to come to the conclusion that he liked it. If he didn't, then he would have to be helped to that conclusion.

Just the thought of all the things that he would do to Will in the future made Hannibal's body tighten; he wished yet again that he hadn't sent the young man on his way home.

The truth was, he didn't think that he could have Will in the house for one moment longer without taking him up to the bedroom, no matter that he had said he wouldn't.

He had far too much trouble having Will near.

Every time Will was anywhere close to him, he had to force himself not to reach out and touch that glowing skin, run his fingers through those tousled dark curls, caress the softness of Will's cheek with his knuckles. It was getting harder not to touch him each time they met.

When there were other people around, he had to curb those desires. Now he was forcing himself to do so when they were alone, and he didn't like that fact.

The more he was near Will, the harder it was to hold himself back. He had never been a man who acted on impulse; he always thought things through very carefully, and acted accordingly. He was always aware of his surroundings, and his own safety.

That was why he'd never been caught.

With Will, he threw that caution to the winds. There had been a few times, when they had been here in his office with other people, that he'd wanted to pull Will into his arms and kiss him, simply to show everyone that Will was *his*, that he would tolerate no interference.

He had managed to stop himself in time, but it hadn't been easy. And he knew that whenever they were near each other, his gaze followed Will like a hawk. He couldn't help it.

That was dangerous. He couldn't risk letting anyone know just how much Will meant to him.

Will Graham was turning his world upside down, in too many ways for him to count. He didn't like that. He didn't want that orderly existence disturbed. He knew what his eventual goal was, and he wanted to work towards it, quietly, calmly, with as few distractions as possible.

Will was most definitely a distraction.

Yet he couldn't simply brush Will aside, turn off that physical *need* for him as though it didn't exist, no matter how much he wanted to. It had gone too far.

He had so much trouble having Will near that the young man was a constant distraction, not only when they were close to each other, but when they were far apart. Even now, his body and mind burned for Will; he couldn't stop thinking about him.

Hannibal closed his eyes, bringing a picture of Will into his mind; Will standing here in front of him, his body completely smooth, looking more desirable than Hannibal had ever seen him. Will in his bed, those intense blue eyes gazing up at him in the dim light.

Those images stayed with him, refused to leave his mind. He tossed and turned at night, unable to stop his body from burning for Will, needing to feel that slim body next to his.

He shouldn't have sent Will home tonight. That much was obvious.

Just thinking about Will now was making him hard; the remembrance of how he had looked, standing here stark naked in this room, was circling through Hannibal's mind, making him feel reckless. He wanted to throw caution to the winds, to go after Will and bring him back.

But no. That wasn't what he needed to do, not tonight. He need to hold himself back, to make himself wait. He needed to be patient.

Will would come to him. It would take a bit of time, but it would happen. He was already well on the way to completely subjugating Will; he had no doubt that the young man needed and wanted him just as much. He didn't doubt that Will was thinking about him now.

Will would burn for him tonight, just as he burned for Will. There would be no sleep for him, and if there was, his restless dreams of what they would do tomorrow night would waken him, drenched in the sweat of desire, counting the hours until they were alone again.

Yes, Will would burn for him. And tomorrow night, he would intensify that burning.

He would sate himself with Will's body tomorrow night, but he would make sure that Will left here still wanting more. It wouldn't do to let his prey be sated so quickly.

Will was already caught in a spider's web, the sticky threads binding him so tightly that there would be no escape for him. He would keep coming back for more, willingly, until he was so dependent on Hannibal that he had nowhere else to turn for what he needed.

And Hannibal had every intention of giving him what he needed -- but only a little at a time, to ensure that his dependency only grew.

Will would experience trouble having *him* near, as well.

The thought made Hannibal smile as he turned towards his bed, starting to unbutton his shirt. Turnabout was fair play, after all -- and that bit of revenge would certainly taste sweet.

Sated

Chapter Summary

> Will should have known that the tiny taste he'd gotten of Hannibal wouldn't leave him sated for the night.

Will sat up in bed, sighing as he punched the pillow. Again. For what felt like the hundredth time since he'd turned out the lights and tried to go to sleep.

It was useless. He couldn't sleep; he'd known from the moment his head had first touched the pillow that it was pointless to even try. He didn't want to try to sleep; he didn't want to be here, safely in his own home, tucked away in Wolf Trap.

No, he wanted to be at Hannibal's house. In his bed.

He had thought that after what Hannibal had done to him tonight in the office, the place where they'd already been intimate more than once, he would feel sated. But he hadn't. That euphoria had worn off before he'd even made it all the way home.

He'd thought about Hannibal all the way there, wrestling with the almost irresistible urge to turn around and go back. But he hadn't done it, even though he'd wanted to.

Hannibal had told him to go home, and he wasn't going to risk making his lover angry. If Hannibal didn't want him there tonight, then he had no right to be there. Even though all of his senses screamed at him to go back, he'd kept driving, refusing to retrace his path.

He'd do what Hannibal wanted, but that didn't mean he liked it.

He had driven by rote; there was no memory of the time he'd spent on the road.

By the time he got home and parked the car in front of his house, his hands were slick with sweat on the steering wheel, and his breath was coming in panting gasps. His hands itched to turn on the engine again and to take off back towards Hannibal's house in a screech of tires.

He hadn't done that. He had forced himself to get out of the car, walk calmly into his house, feed the dogs, and head up to the bedroom.

He should have known that he wouldn't be able to sleep, should have known that he couldn't possibly have been sated for the night by that small taste he'd had of Hannibal. He was still hungry for more, hungry for the satisfaction that only Hannibal could give him.

Tomorrow night. He would only have to wait until tomorrow night, and he'd have what he wanted.

If he could hold out that long, Will thought, punching the pillow again before he lay back down, closing his eyes. If only he could sleep tonight, then tomorrow would be that much closer.

And he would be that much nearer to finally being sated

Behind the Lens

Chapter Summary

Will receives the perfect excuse to push him further into Hannibal's embrace.

Will got out of his car and looked at his watch with a frown. He'd been at his office longer than he'd planned; he hadn't intended to work late today, but he hadn't had much of a choice. Everything had been piling up on him, and he'd lad a lot to do.

He hated knowing that when he didn't stay at work, he felt that he was neglecting what he'd been meant to do. If only he didn't feel such a responsibility to Jack Crawford .... He sighed softly, shaking his head and rubbing his eyes. At least he was home now.

But not for long. He'd be leaving shortly to make his way to Hannibal's house.

Just the thought of being with Hannibal tonight made his heart race. Hannibal had said that they wouldn't be having a session -- and he knew what that meant.

He would be spending the night with Hannibal tonight. He didn't think that his lover would take him to bed, and then expect him to leave after they'd been intimate to spend the night alone in his own bed, so far away. No, they would share a bed tonight.

Just the thought made his heart thump almost painfully in his chest. This was what he wanted, what he'd wanted for what felt like forever. And it was finally going to happen. He was finally going to have Hannibal in the way that he'd dreamed of for so long.

Still, it was a little scary; this was a big step he was taking. This would put whatever it was they had squarely into the category of "relationship."

Would Hannibal feel the same way? He wasn't sure about that.

He had no idea exactly how Hannibal felt about him, or how the other man looked at what they shared. Maybe it was only physical to him; maybe he didn't have any growing feelings for Will other than the obvious lust. He hadn't said anything to make Will believe otherwise.

Maybe tonight would be the night that Hannibal would finally tell Will how he felt.

A shiver went through Will's body at the thought; he wanted to believe that he and Hannibal shared something other than simple lust, something that could last. It wasn't easy for him to admit that he wanted something more, but he was coming closer to it every day.

The problem was not knowing how Hannibal felt. He didn't want to let his feelings become so intense that he couldn't pull back if Hannibal didn't feel the same way.

He had to protect himself, after all. He couldn't let his emotions run away with him; that was only going to lead to a lot of pain that he didn't want to deal with. No, it would be a lot easier to hold back and let Hannibal lead the way before he jumped in head first.

Wasn't he already in too deep? he asked himself. His emotions were already involved, whether he wanted to admit that fact or not. He had already fallen.

But not so far that he couldn't get back up again if he had to.

He wasn't going to let himself fall any further, no matter how intimate he and Hannibal became. He would keep things at the level they were now, and not let his emotions become any more entangled. Yes, that was the safe thing to do. He'd keep those walls up, not let them crumble too soon.

Will took a deep breath, glad that he'd made that decision. Now all he had to do was make sure that he held to it, and everything would be fine.

He frowned as he bounded up the few steps to the front porch, spotting the bouquet of flowers that lay on the chair near the doorway. He'd been sent flowers again -- and this time, he was fairly certain that they weren't from Hannibal, as the other man hadn't mentioned them.

It must be his "admirer" again. He didn't want to think that someone was watching him, but if they were, there was no way he could stop them from doing so.

He hadn't told Jack Crawford about this new development. He hadn't wanted Jack to think that he was rattled by the thought of someone watching him, that it would keep him from doing his job. Jack already thought he was unstable; this would only make things worse.

It was his problem, and he could handle it.

Cautiously, Will picked up the envelope that was lying under the flowers, opening it and reading the words on the page. He read through them once, then again, forcing himself not to look around in a panic as what was written there in black and white sank into his mind.

"I appreciate your new look, sweet William. I'm sure that your lover does, too. I wonder which one of us will get to enjoy it first?"

That was a threat, Most definitely a threat. This person knew about his relationship with Hannibal; they even knew that he'd had his body waxed. They seemed to know everything about him, everything that he did. They were obviously watching him more closely than he'd realized.

Slowly, Will turned around, scanning the area around his home. He didn't feel safe here any longer; suddenly, it seemed far too isolated, too lonely. It would be easy for anyone to find him here, catch him unawares, attack him before he could defend himself.

Take it easy, he told himself, trying to calm down. *There's nobody here but you and the dogs in the house. You're safe.*

But was he really safe? Even now, was there someone out there watching him, hiding behind the lens of a camera, or using binoculars to detect his every move? Where were they? Were they hidden in the woods, or were they somewhere much nearer?

Could they even have been inside his home?

No, that wasn't possible. The dogs would be barking their heads off if there was anyone in the house; they'd have set up some kind of alarm when they heard the car outside.

Still, it was obvious that someone had been watching him, and that was more than a little creepy. Maybe he *should* go to Jack about this, ask for some kind of protective detail. If he was being stalked, then the situation was only going to escalate.

Or maybe he should simply stay with Hannibal until this person was caught.

Will gasped at the thought, his eyes widening. He wanted an excuse to be with Hannibal more, to spend nights with him -- well, here it was, on a silver platter.

Here was the perfect reason for him to spend his nights at Hannibal's house -- and hopefully in Hannibal's bed. He was sure that Hannibal wouldn't turn him away, not when it seemed as though he could be in danger from this person who was watching him.

It felt almost dishonest to ask to stay with Hannibal for this kind of reason, but he really *didn't* feel safe at home any more. And Hannibal couldn't stay here; it wasn't the kind of place that he was used to. One night, yes; longer than that, no.

It would be absurd to expect Hannibal to stay here, even though Will wanted him to. No, he would have to go to Hannibal, not the other way around.

He was already going there tonight. Asking to stay for a while would be a logical step.

It wasn't as though he was asking just because he *wanted* to be there, Will reasoned as he unlocked the door and went into the house. He was asking because he could possibly be in danger if he stayed in his own home alone. It would be safer for him to be at Hannibal's.

Hannibal would see it that way, he was sure. Jack probably wouldn't, but then, Jack didn't like Hannibal much. He'd object to anyone staying there for any length of time.

Will didn't really give a damn what Jack thought. Yes, he would have to ask Jack for help, but he had that right. Jack's personal feelings about Hannibal Lecter didn't come into the picture. Will was a grown man; he didn't have to ask permission to stay with a friend.

Friend? Yes, he told himself firmly. He wasn't about to tell Jack that Hannibal was his lover. It was really none of Jack's business what he did in his personal life.

Though it might not be possible to keep his personal life under wraps for much longer.

Sighing, Will pushed those thoughts aside, going about the things he had to do before the left the house. It only took a few minutes to feed the dogs and pack a bag, then he was back in the car and heading towards Hannibal's house, wondering what the night had in store for him.

Hungry Eyes

Chapter Summary

Will's stalker moves closer to putting some dangerous plans into motion.

So. Will was leaving the house again, was he? Staying the night with his lover, no doubt.

The eyes watching Will narrowed as his car pulled away from the house; the gaze followed until the car was out of sight, and the man holding the binoculars that had been trained on the front door of Will's house sighed as he turned to head towards his own car.

He'd been watching Will Graham for a while now, and he had to admit, his admiration for all that the young man dealt with had grown by leaps and bounds. He was surprised that Will put up with all that he did -- from his job, and from all of the people around him.

No one really seemed to understand Will, he reflected. But he did. He knew that Will had to be tired of all this, had to want to get away from it.

He couldn't even sleep well, poor thing. Well, soon he would be sleeping eternally.

Maybe then he would finally find the peace that he so desperately sought. Yes, he would help Will to that peace -- after he'd taken what he wanted from him.

He would have Will Graham. He'd made up his mind about that, even before he had started watching Will on a daily basis. Will would be his, and then he would dispatch the young man from this world, and go on to the next one. It was, after all, what he did.

He was surprised that Will hadn't learned of him yet -- but a lot of murders happened around this area. Will already had his hands full, trying to solve the crimes that were right there in front of him. He couldn't yet know about crimes that flew under the radar.

By the time Will learned just who he was and what he did, it would be far too late to stop him.

Will wouldn't learn who he was until he was already caught up in the clutches of his destiny; he wouldn't have the chance to stop what was inevitable. He was more than halfway there, each day bringing him closer to his ultimate destruction.

The man smiled as he tossed his binoculars into the front seat, getting into the car and starting the engine. He pulled away from this parking place with barely a sound, turning onto the road that Will had taken. He could take his time; he knew where Will was going.

He would be at Lecter's tonight. With any luck the curtains wouldn't be drawn.

He'd been lucky enough to get a glimpse of what was going on between those two, and he had used that knowledge to his advantage even while his anger had burned white-hot.

Lecter had no right to Will. He couldn't simply reach out and *take* what someone else had made such careful plans to have for themselves. That was why he was waiting, biding his time before he set the wheels of Will's ending in motion.

Destroying Will would also destroy Lecter, if the two of them became close enough. And now, that was just as much his goal as ending Will's life was.

Lecter had taken what was his, and he would have to pay.

It didn't matter what Will wanted; his desires were of no account. He *would* have Will Graham, and no one else had a say in the matter. He had made up his mind that Will wold be his, and that was an end to it. He always got what he wanted.

He'd spent a great deal of time and trouble on Will, making sure that he knew the young man's daily routines, following him everywhere he went. He knew if Will took a single step in a direction that he didn't usually go in. He knew everything about this man.

He made it his business to know. After all, Will belonged to him. He had every right to know what his property did with their time.

Now, Lecter was throwing a curve ball into the proceedings. He didn't like that. He didn't like it at all. Will's relationship with Lecter either had to be curtailed, or Will had to be taken out of the equation much sooner than he'd planned.

It would be a pity to lose Will so soon, but it might have to be done.

He would grieve for the loss of his plaything, but not for long. There would always be someone new, someone else to follow, then to torture and torment before their last moments. There would always be another victim to follow Will Graham. There were plenty of fish in the sea.

But Will was .... special, somehow. He watched all of his victims with hungry eyes, but the gaze he'd cast upon Will was much more personal than usual.

There was something about Will, something that was utterly mesmerizing, that he couldn't quite put his finger on. Will was more interesting than any of the others had been, and he knew that when this young man was gone from the world by his hands, he would never be quite the same.

It almost seemed a shame to do away with such beauty, but it couldn't be helped. He'd set his sights on Will, and that *always* meant death. There was no way that Will could escape; even now, the noose was drawing tighter around him.

It wouldn't be long now. Not long at all.

He would give Will Graham the beautiful death he deserved, the death that he'd dreamed of giving his beautiful boy from the first time he'd seen Will. He would rid himself of the

problem of Lecter by simply removing Will from his presence.

That wouldn't be hard to do. After all, Will lived alone, out in the middle of nowhere. It would be child's play to take him from his home, any time he wanted to do so.

Will would be an easy victim, now that he knew the young man's schedule. He knew Will's habits, knew what he did almost every day. Will had a set routine -- though since the advent of Lecter in his life, he'd been veering away from that routine, which was annoying.

No matter. He would soon set things right again. He didn't know exactly how he would do it -- that required a bit more planning -- but he would remove Will from his everyday routine and keep him for a while, before he gave the young man what he knew Will wanted.

Will might know it yet, but he wanted to be dominated. He wanted to be taken.

His relationship with Lecter proved that, didn't it? It was obvious that Lecter dominated Will to a dangerous degree, and that had to change. Will couldn't be allowed to fall under another's control. There was only *one* person who would be allowed to control him.

His hands tightened on the wheel in anger. After he was done with Will, he would go after Lecter. Destroying him through Will wasn't enough.

No, he would make Lecter suffer. He would drive it home that he had lost Will forever, and that he'd lost him at another man's hands. He would push Lecter to the edge of a precipice, and then force him to jump off. Then he would finally feel that he'd exacted his revenge.

which of them would be made to suffer more -- Lecter, or Will? He wasn't sure.

But they would both suffer, of that he was sure. Sighing contentedly, he leaned back in the seat, his eyes on the road, following Will at a distance. He was in no hurry; he knew where his quarry was going, and he knew just where to be for a ringside view of whatever would happen tonight.

Tonight, his hungry eyes would take in everything that Lecter did to Will, and he would make note of it. He would do the same things to Will himself; he would make Will plead for his touch, beg him for more. And then he would make Will beg for him to stop.

Before too much longer, Will would be his. Not long now. Not long at all.

Urgent

Chapter Summary

> Will needs to tell Hannibal about the note he's received from his stalker -- but some sense of impending disaster is holding him back.

By the time he arrived at Hannibal's house, Will's hands were sweaty and slipping on the steering wheel; when he stopped the car, he had to sit there for a few moments, eyes closed, breathing hard, trying to compose himself before he went into the house.

He didn't need to knock; Hannibal had told him to be here. He could more than likely just walk right in, sit down, and tell Hannibal what had happened.

How was Hannibal going to react? Would he be angry? Would he think that Will had somehow wanted this, or even *asked* for it? That definitely wasn't the case. He wasn't happy at the knowledge that someone he didn't know was following him, watching him.

What really got to him was the fact that they knew about him and Hannibal.

What were they going to do with that knowledge? They could end Hannibal's career if they wanted to; it would be considered unethical for him to sleep with a patient, at the very least. He could lose any credibility he had; he could be stripped of his credentials.

He wasn't going to let anyone do that to Hannibal. He'd keep their relationship secret, no matter what he might have to do. After all, it wasn't like he had been seduced into this.

No, he was a more than willing participant. He didn't know if he loved Hannibal, but he definitely wanted him. He wasn't a child who had gone into this without knowing what the consequences could be. He'd had his eyes wide open every step of the way.

If he'd wanted to end this, all he would have had to do was say so, and he was sure that Hannibal would have backed off. But he hadn't done that; for once in his life, he'd indulged his desires, and he wasn't going to let himself regret one second of doing so.

He was in far too deeply to back out now, and he had the feeling that Hannibal was, too. Neither of them was going to let some unknown person take this away from them.

Will knew how he felt about this -- but Hannibal's reaction was something else entirely.

The knowledge that this person had about the two of them might make Hannibal want to turn away from him. He might not be willing to risk his career for a relationship that might or might not work out. This could be the end of everything for them, the end of all that Will so desperately wanted.

No, he told himself firmly. He wasn't going to let it end like this. He wasn't going to let this unknown person deprive him of something he wanted -- and *needed*.

There was an urgency added to his need to see Hannibal tonight, an urgency that hadn't been there before he had found that note. He almost felt as though he was still being watched, but that was ridiculous. There was no on in the vicinity.

At least, no one that he could actually *see*.

The thought that his stalker could be hiding somewhere, anywhere, made him feel shaky and panicky. All he wanted to do was to get inside the house, tell Hannibal what was going on, and make him pull all of the curtains tightly shut -- especially the ones in the bedroom.

And in the office, too. Had his stalker seen what had gone on in that room? Had he seen the painting? Did he know just how Hannibal viewed Will?

Will's hands trembled at the thought; the need to see Hannibal, to tell him what was going on, was growing even more urgent. Somehow, he couldn't help thinking that if Hannibal knew about this, somehow, he could circumvent it, fix it, make everything better.

Realistically, he knew that there was nothing Hannibal could do. But it would make him feel better to just talk to the other man, to tell him what was happening. He would feel less as though the walls were closing in on him, as though he couldn't manage to take a breath.

The thought of someone invading his life like this was terrifying.

Hannibal would probably tell him to calm down, that he was making too much of this. Hannibal would be able to soothe him, to calm his nerves, to make his heart stop racing a mile a minute.

Taking a deep breath, he got out of the car, though he didn't take his bag out of the back seat. He didn't know if Hannibal would let him stay the night, even after he told the other man what was going on. Hannibal might want him to go to a nearby hotel.

If that was what he wanted, then Will would acquiesce to his wishes. After all, this was Hannibal's house, and if he didn't feel comfortable with having an overnight guest, then Will wasn't going to insist that he needed to stay -- even though he desperately wanted to.

Somehow, he knew that he would feel safer if he was here -- and not just because Hannibal was near. This was a place where he'd always felt at ease, which was a little odd, considering that there had been some awkward conversations between himself and Hannibal.

But that awkwardness had faded away, to be replaced by a feeling of .... well, he didn't know what it was, not exactly. But he felt more comfortable here than he did in his office at the FBI Academy, or in any place other than his own home.

It wasn't just the surroundings. For some strange reason, he felt safe with Hannibal.

Yet there was still that odd feeling that he got from the other man sometimes, as though Hannibal was a caged beast that could pounce at any moment. There was always some

feeling of menace about him, though Will couldn't pinpoint just why he felt that way.

He needed to go into the house, into the office, to sit down and talk to Hannibal. But Hannibal had said that they wouldn't be having a session tonight -- which meant something else.

Hannibal was planning for them to be intimate tonight; there was no doubt of that. He wouldn't have gone out of his way to say that there wouldn't be a psychiatric session if that wasn't what he had in mind; Will was sure of it. Just the idea made his blood run hot.

He *needed* to be with Hannibal tonight, needed to let the other man have his way with him. That need was growing more urgent with each passing moment.

Why, then, was he sitting here hesitating? Why wasn't he already there?

Because he didn't want to tell Hannibal about what had happened. He was afraid of what the other man might do. He didn't want to see Hannibal's anger, to know how white-hot it could run. And he knew, without even seeing it, that he would never want to have that anger turned against him.

Hannibal's anger would be a frightening thing, he was sure of it. The man could be intimidating when he was placid; angry, he would be terrifying.

Will placed his hand on the doorbell, ready to ring it, but still feeling hesitant. There was no reason behind that feeling, only a strange sense that he would sealing his own fate if he went into this house. There was some kind of menace in the air, one that he couldn't make sense of.

Will whirled around to look behind him, then carefully studied the street. There was no one in sight; no one was out tonight. The darkness had already fallen as he'd driven here; people were inside with their families, living their own lives, oblivious to him.

What was *wrong* with him? Why was he hesitating when he knew what he should do? He couldn't be afraid to face Hannibal. After all, *he* had done nothing wrong.

He had nothing to fear. There was nothing to stop him from going inside.

Only his own hesitation, and he had to get past that. No matter how angry Hannibal might be, he had to force himself inside that house, had to talk to the other man. There was no way he could be blamed for this; Hannibal wasn't going to be angry with him.

The urgency was rising to a fever pitch now; he *had* to get inside the house. Slowly, reluctantly, he raised a hand to knock on the door, then remembered that he didn't have to ring the bell or knock. He could just open the door and go in.

He did so, closing the door behind him and leaning against it, his eyes closed, feeling weak and disoriented. Why was it so unnerving just to walk in here?

"Will." Hannibal's voice came to him as though from far away; he opened his eyes, blinking, feeling a little embarrassed that Hannibal had caught him at such a weak moment. He didn't want the other man to see him like this, didn't want to expose that weakness.

"I'm glad you're here. I've been looking forward to this evening."

"So have I," he murmured as he followed Hannibal into the office, his mouth dry, unsure of just what he would say, but knowing that once he started talking, the words would spill out.

The urgency was gone, replaced by a feeling of calm -- but Will knew that was only on the surface. Under that exterior, his nerves were tingling, his entire body taut and tense. He was waiting for the explosion that would surely come when Hannibal knew the situation.

He hoped that he wouldn't be caught in the crossfire.

From Out of Nowhere

Chapter Summary

Will is thankful that Hannibal's anger has never been directed at him.

"What do you mean, 'he's seen us?" Hannibal's voice was like ice; the words fell into a pool of silence, sending ripples through the quiet of the room.

"I think he m-must have seen us when you were at my h-house," Will stammered, uncertain of how to go on. There was no other way that he could put what he'd said; if Hannibal didn't understand what he meant, he didn't know how to state it any more clearly.

He'd said what he needed to say, and Hannibal's reaction wasn't any better than he had thought it would be. In fact, he could honestly say that it was worse.

Hannibal was obviously angry, and Will wasn't sure that part of the other man's anger wasn't directed at him. Hannibal was like an ice sculpture, cold and distant. He hadn't expected this man to give him comfort, but neither had he expected this coldness.

Will wanted to turn away, but he couldn't. He was frozen in place, rooted to the spot.

Hannibal's anger wasn't for him; he was fairly sure of that. But still, it didn't seem quite as thought it was all for the man who had apparently been watching them. That anger seemed as though it was spilling over onto him, though he had no idea why it would.

That anger had gone from zero to a hundred in the blink of an eye; Will couldn't help feeling that it had come from out of nowhere, though it had probably been building for a while.

He didn't blame Hannibal for being angry; in a way, he was, too. At least when he wasn't busy being scared. At the moment, the fear outweighed the anger.

This person had been to his home, for fuck's sake. They'd watched him in bed with Hannibal; they'd probably watched the two of them here, as well. They'd probably watched him *sleeping*, when he was alone and at his most vulnerable.

No, they couldn't have done that. The dogs would have barked their heads off inf anyone they didn't know had tried to get into the house. So he hadn't been in the house; he hadn't stood over Will while he was sleeping, watching every breath that he took.

But he still felt violated. He still felt as though someone had invaded his personal space without him knowing it, felt as though they had taken something from him. He felt as though he was under a microscope, his every word, every move, every breath scrutinized.

It was the most uncomfortable feeling he'd ever known.

"We should close the curtains tonight," he managed to mumble, hoping that his words wouldn't anger the man in front of him further. But he wanted to put that thought out there, to let Hannibal know that he could offer suggestions to keep this person from seeing them.

"I'm not angry at you, Will." Hannibal's voice was still cold, but the edge was gone from it. The anger, so quick to come from out of nowhere, seemed to have vanished as quickly as it had manifested.

Will breathed a sigh of relief, glad that Hannibal seemed to have gotten past that first flush of fury that had darkened his face and made him seem, just for a few moments, like someone who Will didn't know -- and who he didn't want to know.

That side of Hannibal was frightening, and he hoped that he would never see it again. Or if he did, that such fury wouldn't be turned in his direction.

"I'm angry at the fact that this man seems to have found out so much about you -- and about us," Hannibal continued, frowning. "It could be dangerous, not only for my career, but for yours as well. I could be brought up on ethics charges -- but you could be, as well."

Will nodded, sighing again. "Yeah, I know we could," he agreed, glancing over at the window at the dark night outside. "If we're going to keep .... seeing each other, then we're going to have to be more circumspect. We'll have to be a lot more careful about what people can see."

Though he thought they'd already been careful, apparently that wasn't the case.

He didn't want this person to be able to see them again. Just the thought of someone watching what he and Hannibal did together, someone else seeing how he enjoyed Hannibal's touch, was enough to make him feel like squirming with embarrassment.

That sort of thing wasn't meant to be seen by anyone other than the two people who were being intimate. He didn't want to think of anyone else being aroused by viewing his pleasure.

Maybe other people were aroused by that sort of thing; he wasn't. It felt like a violation of his privacy, as if some unknown person had opened a window into his private life and pulled something of him out of it kicking and screaming, protesting all the way.

In a sense, that was just what they had done.

"Do you want me to go to a hotel?" he asked, trying to keep his voice on a even keel. "If you don't want me to stay here tonight, that's not a problem."

"Of course not," Hannibal said immediately, shaking his head, his frown deepening. "I don't like the idea of you being in a hotel with this person stalking you, Will. It would be much too easy for him to get to you there -- and at your home, as well. I think you need to stay here."

Well, that had been easier than he'd thought it would be. He hadn't expected Hannibal to sound so protective of him, or to be so obviously worried about his safety. In spite of himself, his heart gave a little thump, almost feeling as if it was bumping against the wall of his chest.

"Th-thanks," he said, suddenly feeling exhausted. The drive from Wolf Trap under such stress was taking its toll; he felt weak, boneless.

"I think you need to take a shower, Will," Hannibal told him, looking worried. "You look worn out. Try to relax, let your mind go. We don't have to do anything tonight if you don't want it -- you can sleep in one of the other bedrooms. I don't think you're in any state for .... intimacy."

Will was sure that he could hear regret in Hannibal's voice.

He shook his head quickly, denying the other man's words. "No, no, I'm fine. But you're right -- I need to take a shower and try to relax. Give me half an hour?"

Hannibal nodded, gesturing towards the stairs. "You know where the bathrooms are," he said, his gaze moving down Will's body and back up again before settling on his face. Will could see the desire in those eyes; it was a mirror of the desire that he felt whenever he looked at Hannibal.

Maybe being intimate with Hannibal would take his mind off everything that was going on, help him relax. He needed to have that desire stated; the burning deep within him needed to be assuaged. If it wasn't, he was sure that he would explode -- internally, if not outwardly.

That look made him shiver in anticipation; he wished that he could speed up the clock so that whatever would happen tonight was already in progress, or at least was about to happen. But he would have to be patient and wait for just a little while longer.

"I'm assuming you have a bag in the car," Hannibal said, glancing towards the front door. "I'll get it while you take a shower. I'll be upstairs shortly, Will."

That was dismissal if he'd ever heard one. Will nodded, heading for the stairs, suddenly feeling reluctant to leave the room. He had the sense that Hannibal was planning something, but he didn't know what that could be, and it made him a little wary.

There was no reason for him to feel that way, he told himself firmly. He could trust Hannibal.

Yes, the other man's anger could come from out of nowhere, but it could also disappear as quickly as it formed. There was nothing to be afraid of. Hannibal wouldn't do anything to harm him, and as he'd said, the anger wasn't for him. The anger was directed at the situation.

As Will walked slowly up the stairs, he heard the front door open and close. Hannibal had gone to get his bag, which meant that he had a limited amount of time to shower.

That thought quickened his steps; Hannibal would expect him to be showered and ready for his plans to begin when he came upstairs. He doubted that he would have that promised half hour, so he'd have to hurry. It shouldn't take him long to shower and go to Hannibal's bedroom.

Whatever would happen tonight, he couldn't wait for it to begin.

Colder Than Ice

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is cold and calculating when it comes to eliminating competition.

Hannibal watched Will as the young man walked up the steps; it was obvious that Will was reluctant to go at first, then his steps gathered speed. Hannibal didn't know what had crossed his mind to send him on his way, but he was glad that it had.

He needed to be alone for a few minutes to absorb what Will had told him, to try to control the anger that swept through him at the thought of someone else encroaching on his territory.

Will was *his*. No one else had any sort of right to him.

The thought that this man, whoever he was, had been watching Will made his fists clench and his jaw tighten. He wanted to visit the worst sort of retribution on this man, to make him suffer, to make him realize that what he had done was wrong in every way.

The coldness that seeped through him would have frightened a lesser man. But Hannibal knew how to deal with that coldness; he knew how to assuage it.

He would take his pleasure with Will tonight, more than once. He would make the boy his in every way; even if Will didn't realize that he belonged to Hannibal, his imprint would be left irrevocably upon that beautiful body. He would finally claim what had always been his.

Even now, he might have waited a bit too long. But that was easily rectified.

There would be no struggle, no resistance. Oh, there might be at first, but he knew just how to melt any sort of resistance that Will might put up. He knew how to kindle Will's desire, knew how to make Will want what only he could give.

He would give Will a bit of time to orient himself; it was obvious that the boy was shaken up, and Hannibal needed him to be a bit more grounded tonight.

If Will was shaken by any experience tonight, he wanted it to come from him.

That was the most maddening thing about this man who was stalking Will, Hannibal told himself, his fists clenching again. *He* was the one who seemed to be breaking Will, when that pleasure should belong completely to Hannibal.

Will was *his* to break. This person was overstepping their bounds; that would have to be stopped as soon as possible.

He wasn't going to let this man continue to have his way with Will. It was a violation, not only of Will, but of what the two of them shared. His bond with Will was nascent, tenuous; he would have to strengthen that bond at the same time that he eliminated the problem.

His desire for Will might run hot, but in this instance, he would be colder than ice.

Make Me Feel

Chapter Summary

No one has ever given Will the exhilarating feeling of freedom that Hannibal does.

Will sighed softly as he leaned down to turn on the water in the shower, testing it with his fingers until it seemed hot enough. Hopefully, taking a shower would relax him and get him more in the mood for what he hoped would happen between himself and Hannibal tonight.

He'd been thinking about this all day; it was a shame that finding those flowers and that ominous not on his front porch had turned his mood sour.

He wasn't the only one who wasn't happy with the way things had gone today, he told himself as he pulled back the shower curtain and stepped under the hot spray. Hannibal had never seemed so cold, almost .... terrifying. He hadn't realized that the other man could be so intimidating.

Hannibal could be truly frightening when he wanted to be.

Will resolutely pushed the memory of the anger in Hannibal's eyes away, not wanting to dwell on it. At least that anger hadn't been directed at him, thankfully. Though he could have sworn that Hannibal's gaze turned cold when he'd looked into the other man's eyes.

Of course Hannibal wasn't angry at him. He hadn't done anything wrong. He hadn't *asked* for this, after all. And he certainly didn't want it.

Tonight, Hannibal would make love to him -- though he wasn't really sure that he could rightly call what they did "making love." It almost felt more as though Hannibal was trying to assert some kind of mastery over him rather than to do anything that could go by the word "love."

Even when they were at their most intimate, somehow, Hannibal seemed oddly .... cold.

That was a weird thing to think, Will told himself with a frown. He knew how much Hannibal wanted him; the other man had made that more than clear. Desire wasn't cold; it ran hot, as he had every reason to know. The man who was his lover wasn't cold towards him.

No, Hannibal was anything *but* cold. He'd felt the heat of the older man's passion more than once, and he knew that it could leave a searing burn.

Then why did he associate Hannibal with coldness? He shook his head, sending droplets of water flying. He didn't want to follow that line of thought; it didn't seem to fit, not now, not

when he was naked in the shower in Hannibal's home, not knowing what would happen tonight.

He might not feel completely in control when he was with Hannibal, but that shouldn't surprise him. His lover wasn't a man who would easily relinquish control -- and Will had to admit that when he was with Hannibal, it was much easier to hand over those reins to someone else.

In fact, he *liked* doing that. He liked giving over that responsibility.

He'd never felt like that with anyone else -- but then, there weren't that many people he'd been with to compare his nascent relationship to. The two women he'd had a clumsy intimacy with didn't count; they'd disappeared from his life as quickly as they'd entered it.

And the three men who he'd fooled around with didn't count, either. One of them had taught him how to give head; other than that, there had been nothing special about that relationship. The other two didn't even register as a blip on his radar.

He'd forgotten their names. All of them. He hadn't given his virginity to any of them; no, that honor had gone to Hannibal, and it hadn't been given so much as *taken*.

Will was still on the fence about that; a part of him resented the fact that Hannibal had simply *taken* him, rather than making sure that he'd actually wanted that intimacy. Hannibal had simply reached out for what he wanted, with no questions asked.

But should he really be surprised at that? he asked himself with a sigh. That was the kind of man Hannibal was. He had somehow *known* that a part of Will wanted him; he'd known that in the end, he wouldn't have to ask to get what he wanted.

He himself wasn't like that. He couldn't read people so easily.

He could see through the eyes of killers, but he couldn't read a simple question in someone's eyes. He didn't have the facility with people that Hannibal did; he never would. His weaknesses were Hannibal's strengths, but he didn't know if the other man had any weaknesses.

They couldn't be more different. Hannibal wasn't anything like him, not really. It was strange how he felt so comfortable with the other man.

He'd never felt that way with anyone else. He'd always been uncomfortable in his own skin, never wanting to share his body with anyone else. But with Hannibal, it seemed natural to be naked, to let his lover have his way with him. He wasn't awkward or embarrassed.

Hannibal took him out of himself, in a way, made him feel that he could step outside of who he was, or who he'd always been. Hannibal had already made Will his, whether he realized that or not. Will knew that at this point, he didn't have the strength to pull away.

Nor did he want to. He had no desire to turn away from where he was.

It took Will a moment to realize that while he'd been standing here thinking about Hannibal, his hand had moved between his legs; color flushed his cheeks when he realized that he'd been slowly stroking his cock, pleasure starting to seep through his body.

He didn't want to touch himself; he wanted Hannibal to touch him. He wanted those hands and those lips on his body, drawing inadvertent reactions out of him; he wanted Hannibal to do what he would with him, to take him in any way that he chose.

Sighing, Will forced himself to spread his arms out to either side of his body, then took a deep breath. He didn't need to touch himself. He shouldn't be doing it. He should be waiting for Hannibal to give him that kind of pleasure. After all that was why he was here tonight.

Wasn't it? Wasn't he here for no other reason than to give himself up to his desires?

He wanted to give himself up to Hannibal in every way. He wanted to open himself to the other man; the idea that he could do that was a kind of freedom, making him feel giddy with discovery.

No one else had ever made him *feel* so strongly. He'd never wanted anyone else's hands on his body; he had always felt more inclined to hide himself from others, rather than opening up to them. Hannibal was the first person who had made him *want* intimacy.

Would Hannibal somehow *know* that he'd been touching himself in the shower? Will didn't doubt it; somehow, Hannibal seemed to be able to see right through him, to reach into his mind and pull out his deepest thoughts, his deepest desires.

Hannibal would know what he'd been doing -- and Hannibal would know what he wanted.

Right now, all he wanted was to be in Hannibal's bed. He wanted to feel those hands all over him, those lips on intimate areas of his body, Hannibal's cock inside him. He wanted to be filled, fucked, driven to the highest peaks of ecstasy before he came down again.

Nobody else could give him that, Will told himself, turning towards the spray and closing his eyes as he lifted his face. Nobody but Hannibal.

He didn't want to be with anyone else. Hannibal was the only man he wanted -- the only person he'd *ever* really wanted. Did that mean that he was meant to be with Hannibal? He didn't know, but they *did* seem to have some kind of connection.

He didn't hear the curtain being drawn back, didn't realize that Hannibal was there until he heard the other man's softly murmured words.

"Hello, sweet William.I thought I'd join you."

Will let himself lean back against Hannibal's chest, a soft moan slipping from his lips as those strong arms wrapped around his waist. His body was taut, desire running rampant through his veins, and he had no doubt that it would be assuaged now that Hannibal was here with him.

Hannibal would know exactly what he wanted without being told. Somehow, he always did; even when Will wasn't sure of just what he wanted, he could trust Hannibal to take the reins,

to guide his desire into the path that it was meant to take.

"Make me feel," he whispered, closing his eyes and giving himself over to whatever would be.

Primal Need

Chapter Summary

Will has never needed anyone in quite the way he needs Hannibal.

Will moaned as Hannibal's hands moved down his body, then back up again, from his hips to his chest. Those hands would touch him in all kinds of intimate ways tonight, and he welcomed every one of them. He needed Hannibal's touch, needed to be with him.

He needed to forget everything else that was going on his life. Just for tonight.

His entire life felt as though it was falling to pieces; the only part of it that felt *real* was his relationship with Hannibal. He needed to have something steady and stable in his life, something that he could hold on to, and for now, Hannibal was it.

He'd never known anyone as steady and reliable as this man was. Hannibal had held out a lifeline to him, and he had no choice but to take it and hold on for dear life.

Those hands were moving down his hips now, down to his inner thighs, stroking his skin, eliciting shudders of desire through his entire body. Hannibal knew just how to touch him; no one could rouse his desire to a fever pitch the way that this man could.

No one else had ever been given the chance, Will told himself. And no one else ever would be. Hannibal was the only man he wanted; he couldn't see himself with anyone else. No one else could ever make him feel like this; there was no reason to ever want another lover.

Will choked back a cry as Hannibal's fingers closed around his erection; he had already touched himself, but that didn't feel half as good as having Hannibal touch him.

He wanted to thrust his hips forward into Hannibal's hand, but he didn't dare.

He was sure that if Hannibal was touching him like this, then the other man had definite plans for what was intended to happen, and Will didn't want to interfere with those plans in any way. He had put himself into those capable hands, and he was willing to go along with whatever Hannibal did.

Strange that he could trust Hannibal so much, when he made it a point never to trust *anyone*. But in the relatively short time that they'd known each other, and the even shorter time that they'd been intimate, Hannibal had managed to break down those walls.

There were no protective barriers around him now, physically or otherwise. Hannibal could have his way with him, and Will knew that he was helpless to stop whatever might happen.

He wanted it that way, he told himself. He didn't want to stop Hannibal; if he balked or pulled back now, this intimacy might stop forever, and that would destroy him. He *needed* this, needed Hannibal like he needed the very air he breathed.

"I believe that you've been touching yourself," Hannibal whispered into Will's ear, his voice soft. "You shouldn't be doing that, Will. You should have waited for *me* to touch you. I may have to punish you for that. You should know better than to misbehave."

Will opened his mouth to say that he hadn't realized he was misbehaving, then closed it without speaking. He doubted that his words would carry any weight. And if he spoke, he might break the tension that was flowing around them, the delicious tension that made his body quiver.

He was trembling from head to toe with the effort to hold himself back.

But he had to. He didn't want to lose control so soon; that would probably only make Hannibal turn away from him, and he couldn't bear that. He'd waited too long for this; the last few days felt like an eternity. He *needed* to be with Hannibal, needed what only this man could give him.

"So beautifully smooth," Hannibal murmured, his free hand moving back up Will's body to his chest, pinching at the delicate pink buds of his nipples. "Such a lovely body. I've thought about this night, Will. I've dreamed of having you all to myself."

Will wasn't sure whether than sounded ominous, or wonderful. Maybe it had elements of both; the words made him feel delirious, weak at the knees.

He hadn't realized that with each word he spoke, Hannibal had been turning him towards the shower wall; this was the largest shower he'd ever been in, so large that it was easy for them both to move around comfortably. He gasped when he was pushed forward, colliding with the cool tiles.

Will raised his hands to press his palms against the tiles, turning his face to the side, away from the spray. He closed his eyes, feeling the cool, wet tiles under his cheek, sure that he knew what Hannibal planned to do with him, his heart racing at the thought.

Hannibal was going to fuck him, here in the shower. Hannibal was going to enter him and take him, just like he'd done when Will was bent over that table, and again on the couch in his office. Hannibal would be inside him -- and that was exactly where Will wanted him.

He *needed* to be fucked, to be filled, to be taken. He needed it more than he'd ever needed anything, even though he hadn't even thought about sex in relation to himself for a long time before he'd been with this man. Hannibal seemed to bring out his sexual side.

Hannibal brought out a primal need in him that was almost frightening.

He could hear the slight *pop* as the cap on a tube of what he assumed was lube was opened; trust Hannibal to be prepared. He must have gotten some lube that was specifically formulated for use in a shower before Will had even considered that this could happen.

He gasped again as not one but two fingers entered him, more roughly than he'd thought they would. That was more than a likely the residual anger Hannibal no doubt was still harboring; he just hoped that anger wouldn't end up being turned fully on him.

It wouldn't be, Will told himself firmly. He hadn't done anything wrong. He wasn't the one Hannibal was angry at; it was this stalker who was disrupting their lives.

Within moments, he was pushing his hips back against those fingers, unaware that he was whimpering with each movement. He needed more than what Hannibal was giving him; just two fingers inside him wasn't nearly enough. He needed Hannibal's cock, needed to be thoroughly filled.

"Only a few sessions, and you've already become desperate for my cock, haven't you, sweet William?" Will wanted to nod in agreement, but he resisted the impulse. Better to keep Hannibal guessing, not to let him know that Will was completely under his spell.

Though he probably already knew. There was no doubt that he was fully in control; Will hardly knew that he was keening with need when those fingers slipped out of him and Hannibal stepped closer, his erection pressing against Will's bottom.

He cried out when Hannibal entered him, his fingers clawing for purchase on the smooth tiles and finding none. His muscles tightened around the intrusion, the feeling of being deliciously *filled* seeping through his senses, making him moan aloud.

Each thrust was lifting him to the sky, each movement pure bliss.

Hannibal's hands were on his, holding him in place; all he could do was stand there and let himself be fucked, pushing his hips back into each thrust with an eagerness he hadn't known he could feel. Each thrust was harder as Hannibal drove into him relentlessly.

This should hurt, but it didn't. It felt wonderful, as though being taken was a kind of release, a gift that his lover gave him to lift him out of this world and into another.

The tiles were cool beneath his cheek and against the front of his body, as compared to the heat of Hannibal behind him, pushing into him. Hannibal's hands seemed to elicit heat everywhere they touched; he was burning from the inside out.

His orgasm was coiling in the pit of his belly, the pleasure starting to make him slip away. If this went on for much longer, he was sure that he'd pass out in Hannibal's arms, with the other man still pumping into him, his body offering no resistance.

When he came, he literally saw stars; sparks flashed before his eyes, and he was sure that he was going to collapse in a heap the moment Hannibal pulled out of him. But that didn't happen; he merely leaned against the wall, his legs rubbery, unable to stand on his own.

Will barely felt it when Hannibal's arms wrapped around his waist; he was still trembling from the aftershock of the strongest orgasm he'd ever had. He thought that it was possible he could fall to pieces at any second; if he moved, he would fall apart, disintegrate into the water swirling around his feet.

But he didn't pass out, and he didn't fall apart. He merely leaned back into Hannibal's arms, and felt those soft lips brush across his forehead.

"I believe you've earned the right to have a bit of rest before we continue this, Will. Go to my bedroom, and I'll join you there shortly. I still have a few things to do. I merely wanted to join you here to give us both pleasure as an entreé to the rest of the evening."

Hannibal's voice was very soft, but it carried an undertone of command.

Will knew that he couldn't put up any resistance; if he did, then Hannibal might tell him to leave, that their evening was over. He couldn't deal with being alone tonight; he needed to be here with Hannibal. His body was already craving more; he couldn't leave it at this.

Hannibal stepped out of the shower, leaving the water on. Will could heard him drying off, then wrapping a towel around himself. Seconds later, he heard the door open and softly close again; he slumped against the tiles, raising a fist to his mouth and biting down on his knuckles.

He'd been well and thoroughly fucked, but his body still craved more of his lover. What was wrong with him? Was he such a slut that he couldn't get enough, now that the floodgates had finally been opened? Or was he only this way for Hannibal, and no one else?

Of course he was only this way with Hannibal. No one else could elicit such a reaction from him; he would never want another person in this way, not ever again.

Hannibal filled a primal need within him, a need that he would have never known existed if they had never met. How had he managed to deal with life before he'd met Hannibal? In the short time they'd been involved, he belonged to the other man in every way -- mind, body and soul.

Slowly, he bent to turn off the water, then stepped out onto the fluffy bath mat. He reached for a towel, drying himself off almost absently, suddenly feeling reluctant to leave this room. He didn't know what to expect when eh went to Hannibal's bedroom, and that scared him a little.

Scared? Why should he be scared of the man who was his lover? That was ridiculous, Will told himself firmly. True, Hannibal hadn't been gentle here in the shower, but he wasn't a man given to tenderness. That wasn't something he should expect.

His heart was already racing, his body hardening in anticipation.

He started to wrap a towel around himself, then almost laughed at the absurdity of it. Hannibal had already seen him naked; they had fucked right here in the shower. There was no reason to cover himself up; they'd gone far past any reason for modesty.

Will opened the bathroom door, looking around and not seeing Hannibal. He had no idea where the other man was, but he was sure that he'd find out soon enough. Silently, he made his way down the hall to Hannibal's bedroom, his heart thudding, hoping that the wait wouldn't be long.

In Walks the Night

Chapter Summary

When Hannibal walks into the room, it's as though the darkness of the night engulfs Will.

Will sighed as he stretched out on the bed, glancing towards the door. He'd closed it deliberately, so that he would know when Hannibal entered the room. Though there really wasn't much chance of him dozing off; he was far too keyed-up for that.

He should be tired after what had passed between them in the shower, but he wasn't. Instead, his body craved more of the other man, as much as he could get.

He was hooked on Hannibal. He might as well admit it. As unexpected as this relationship had been, he was in so deep now that there was no way he could back out. Hannibal had become a part of him, a part that he didn't want to let go, a part that he desperately needed.

Hannibal was his lifeline in a world that was increasingly bewildering. Whenever he felt that he was starting to spin out of control, Hannibal was his center; if he didn't have that steadying influence in his life, he was sure that he'd end up in a very dark place.

But he was in a dark place already, wasn't he?

Will sighed at the thought, pushing it out of his mind. None of that mattered, not now. The important thing was that he was here with Hannibal, and that he was gong to get what he wanted, at least for tonight. He would be given all that he needed to make it through another day.

Hannibal gave him what no one else could -- a sense of stability, a rock to cling to when he felt that he was starting to drown in waters that he couldn't navigate.

What did he give Hannibal in return? Will's lips curved in a sardonic smile as he pillowed his head on his hands, closing his eyes. It was obvious what he gave Hannibal. His body. And whatever else Hannibal wanted from him, he'd probably give that, too.

He could feel his body tighten at the sound of the door opening; he didn't open his eyes, knowing that Hannibal was standing in the doorway looking at him. He wanted Hannibal to get a good look at his body, to drink him in with that predatory stare.

"I wouldn't have thought that you could be any more lovely, Will," Hannibal murmured, his soft voice pervading the quiet of the room. Will could almost feel those words wrapping around him, like a warm blanket on a cold night. "But removing all of the hair only enhances you."

"Th-thank you," Will managed to stammer, uncertain of what else to say. "I thought you'd like it."

"Oh, I do. Very much," Hannibal told him, approaching the bed. Will felt the mattress dip under Hannibal's weight; he could sense the other man bending over him, but he still didn't open his eyes. He wasn't prepared to meet his lover's dark gaze quite yet.

It was as though the night had walked into the room when Hannibal had entered; darkness closed in around him, hemming him in. Hannibal had that kind of effect on him; he was the light and the darkness rolled into one, with the darkness winning out.

He could feel Hannibal's hands on his skin, moving down his body as though to test the smoothness of his skin. "I'm quite glad you did this," Hannibal told him, approval in his tone. "There is nothing in the way now. I can feel you much more easily."

"I thought it was what you wanted," Will murmured, feeling a little embarrassed by Hannibal's inspection of his body. "After I saw how you'd painted me."

"You catch on quickly, Will." Again, approval in that tone. "Very well done."

Will wasn't sure how to feel at that compliment, or what to say. "Thanks," he murmured, wondering just what Hannibal planned to do to him. He knew that they would be intimate, but there were so many different ways to do that, and he had no idea what his lover's intentions were.

"Turn over," Hannibal said briskly, sitting back on his heels. "I'm going to take you from behind, Will. I want to be able to touch you while I take you. I want to feel the smoothness of your skin." His voice had dropped to a seductive whisper, a tone that sent shivers down Will's spine.

Obediently, he did as he was told, his body tightening with anticipation. It wouldn't be long now before Hannibal was inside him, thrusting into him, filling him, taking him ....

He almost gasped when he felt a finger slid down the cleft of his ass; then Hannibal's hands were lifting his hips, spreading him. Will could feel a hot blush suffusing his cheeks; he wasn't used to being studied like this, to having the most intimate area of his body inspected.

He wasn't sure whether it was humiliating, arousing, or a little bit of both.

Hannibal leaned to the side; Will knew that he was reaching for the small tube of lubricant he'd seen sitting on the table by the bed. Only a few seconds later, Will felt one lubed finger slide inside him, then another, slowly spreading him, then probing deeper.

He resisted the urge to moan, not wanting to distract Hannibal from what he was doing with any sound. But Hannibal didn't seem to like his silence; he leaned forward to whisper in Will's ear, "Make all the noise you like, sweet William. I find that rather stimulating."

All right, then. When those long fingers brushed against his prostate, Will let out a strangled gasp, then a moan. He couldn't hold the sounds back, no matter how hard he might try.

And really, he wasn't trying very hard. Not any more.

In only a few moments, Hannibal was rhythmically thrusting those fingers deep inside him, then pulling them nearly all the way back out, simulating intercourse. Will cried out with each thrust, his hips pushing back, wanting more of Hannibal than he was getting.

"Please, Hannibal," Will moaned, feeling as though he was near the verge of tears. The frustration was building up inside him; he couldn't deal with this teasing for much longer. He needed more of Hannibal, much more than just two fingers thrusting into him. "*Please.*"

"Patience, sweet William." Those fingers slid out of him, and just a moment later, they were replaced by the thick head of Hannibal's cock. Will held his breath; he knew that Hannibal would more than likely enter him quickly, the first thrust bringing with it a stab of pain.

It was always like that. But he should be used to the pain by now; and besides, it didn't take long for that pain to quickly morph into exquisite pleasure.

His muscles tensed, tightened, waiting for the inevitable joining.

He had to hold back his scream when that joining came; he had been waiting for it, but he hadn't known when it would come, and the suddenness surprised him. The pain flashed through his body, then was gone in a matter of seconds.

Then there was no pain, only a slow-burning pleasure that seemed to seep through his entire being, filling him from the top of his head to the tips of his toes. Will pushed his hips back, wanting more of Hannibal, wanting the other man deeper inside him.

It was as though he was enveloped by the night; Hannibal *was* the night, and Hannibal was all around him, inside him, drawing him deeper into that particular darkness that belonged only to him. And Will went willingly, more than ready to be consumed by that darkness.

Hannibal's arms wrapped around his waist, pulling him to his knees, and then his back was pressed against Hannibal's chest, and those hands were moving down the front of his body, one hand playing with the tender buds of his nipples, the other curling around his rigid penis.

Will could do nothing but gasp with pleasure; Hannibal's hands were guiding his body, pulling sensations from him that he hadn't known he could feel.

Those hands were doing things to him that he'd only dreamed of experiencing.

No one had ever touched him like this; no one had ever made him *feel* the way that Hannibal did. He wouldn't have thought it possible that so many sensations could exist, that one person could know them all, and could play his body like some rare instrument.

His orgasm was uncoiling deep in his belly; he could feel it rising to the surface, threatening to break over him before he was ready. He gave in to that orgasm, letting Hannibal draw it from him, giving himself over to the feeling of being taken, of being used to fulfill another's desires.

Hannibal was stroking him in rhythm with those thrusts; the hand on his cock was drawing his orgasm from him as surely as feeling Hannibal inside him was. Will closed his eyes, leaning back against the man behind him, giving himself over to the pleasure.

When his orgasm came, it drew a keening, wordless cry from his lips; he couldn't have held the sound back if he'd tried. It was a mixture of a scream and Hannibal's name, cut short by his intake of breath, his need for extra oxygen as his muscles tightened and then went slack.

He wanted to fall forward onto the pillows, but Hannibal's arms around his waist kept him from doing that. Will dragged in one ragged breath, then another, seeing stars dance behind his closed eyelids as Hannibal thrust into him a few more times before reaching his own climax.

Only then did he allow himself to sag in Hannibal's arms, to let out the breath he'd been holding, to let himself go limp as Hannibal pulled out of him.

Those hands were pushing him down onto the pillows, turning him over onto his back.

Only when he was lying on his back did he open his eyes, to look up into Hannibal's face. The other man was perusing his body again, that dark gaze roving up and down his supine form, the look there one that Will couldn't quite decipher. That gaze was almost .... *hungry*.

He didn't know if that look exhilarated him -- or scared the hell out of him.

"You need to sleep, sweet William," Hannibal told him, his gaze meeting Will's. "I believe that I might have tired you out for the evening -- and you have quite a lot on your mind other than the two of us. Sleep will help. I hope you can find it here more easily than you do at home."

"Aren't you going to sleep here, too?" Will asked, surprised that Hannibal wouldn't choose to sleep in his own bed just because someone would be sharing it.

But Hannibal shook his head, a slight frown forming between his brows. "No, I will not," he said, his voice quiet and even, not looking at Will. "It's better if I don't share a bed with you in that way, Will. If I do, then I can't answer for what else might happen between us."

"Oh." It was all that Will could think of to say; he didn't know what else could happen between them that hadn't already been done, but if that was what Hannibal wanted, he wasn't going to question it. "I guess I'll see you in the morning, then."

"You most certainly will." Hannibal smiled down at him, lifting a hand to caress Will's cheek with his knuckles. "Sleep well, sweet William. And pleasant dreams. I hope they're of me."

With those words, Hannibal moved off the bed and out of the room as quietly as a cat, closing the door behind him and leaving Will staring after him, still unable to believe that Hannibal would have sex with him, but refused to share a bed just to sleep.

That just seemed .... odd, even for Hannibal, who was one of the oddest men Will knew.

But he shouldn't question it, not if that was what Hannibal wanted. He sighed, turning over onto his side and pulling the covers up around his nude body. Maybe tonight he'd be able to sleep, since he was in Hannibal's bed and his body was completely sated.

And maybe tomorrow morning, Hannibal would come in here and awaken him with another bout of what they'd just shared. That thought made Will's lips curve into a smile, even as his body gave in to his need for rest and his eyes closed in exhaustion.

Only So Far

Chapter Summary

Hannibal knows that he can only push Will so far before Will begins pushing back.

Hannibal padded silently down the stairs, pulling on a robe as he went. He had wanted to stay in his bedroom with Will, but he knew that at the moment, that wasn't the best idea.

He'd had the irresistible urge to take Will into his arms after they'd coupled, to hold him and kiss him and confess everything to him. To tell Will everything about himself, in the hopes that the young man had started to care for him enough to understand him.

But that would never happen. Will could never understand. No one could.

No matter how much he wanted to show a softer side to Will, to reach out for the emotions that had always eluded him, he knew that he couldn't. It was best to keep a wall between himself and Will, to keep his distance, to let their only involvement be sexual.

He might tell himself that he could be friends with Will, but in the end, that wasn't going to happen. He'd seen the possibilities for friendship, but Will wasn't as much like him as he had at first thought. And he didn't think that he could push Will to become like him.

There was only so far he could push before Will would push back.

Yes, Will had part of that darkness within him, but it would never engulf him as Hannibal's personal darkness had. Will simply didn't have that instinct to kill He never would.

The silence seemed to close in around him, making his sigh reverberate around the walls of his office. He sat down in his desk chair, steepling his fingers under his chin as he contemplated the man sleeping upstairs in his bed, and whatever future they might have.

He wanted a future with Will. But that future probably wouldn't last.

Will would have to know about him at some point. He wouldn't be able to hold that information back, not if they continued as they were now.

It was disconcerting to feel that he could have Will in his life as a lover for quite a while. He would be able to keep vital information about himself from Will for as long as he chose, until Will began putting more and more pieces of the puzzle together.

But that wouldn't last forever. And once Will discovered his secrets, his life would be forfeit. Hannibal just hoped that wouldn't happen before he was ready to be done with Will, before he had wrung every possible drop of pleasure from their relationship.

He would continue doing just that, until he'd had enough. Though he didn't believe he would get his fill for a long time to come.

Though at some point, he would. Which meant that Will Graham's days were numbered.

One Step Further

Chapter Summary

After having erotic dreams the night before, Will waits for Hannibal to come to him and make those dreams reality.

Will awoke with a start, raising his head from the pillow and blinking at the unfamiliar surroundings. Where was he? What was he doing here? Why wasn't he at home in his own bed, with the dogs whining to go out and to be fed? What was he dong in a strange bed?

Then memory came back to him. He'd spent the night at Hannibal's house because he'd been worried after that note he'd gotten from his stalker.

Hannibal had taken him in the shower, and then again in this bed. Then he'd insisted that Will needed to get his rest, and that he had other things to do. He had no idea where Hannibal had slept, but there must be at least half a dozen bedrooms in this house.

It just sucked that Hannibal hadn't slept *here*, with him.

He'd had some really odd dreams last night; maybe that had been because of the unfamiliar bed, but he didn't think so. He was almost positive that the intimacy he and Hannibal had shared before he'd fallen asleep had led to those dreams.

Those very erotic dreams. Those dreams that would bring a burning blush to his cheeks if he had to talk about them with Hannibal. Which was stupid, Will chided himself. Hannibal was his lover; he shouldn't feel at all embarrassed to discuss erotic dreams with this man.

He didn't have anything to hide from Hannibal. The other man knew everything there was to know about his body; Hannibal had touched him intimately, kissed him, been inside him. There were things that Hannibal hadn't done to him, true, but Will knew they were coming.

Just that thought was enough to make him harden; he squirmed uncomfortably, moving his hand between his legs. Hannibal could come into the room at any moment; the last thing he wanted was for his lover to catch him masturbating.

Or was it? Will's gaze flew to the painting, exhibited so proudly.

Hannibal might not have seen him touch himself, but he seemed to know just how Will would do it. It would be exciting to let Hannibal watch him, to see those eyes narrow as they studied his body, watched him pleasure himself so that Hannibal could duplicate that pleasure ....

No, not duplicate it. Hannibal would take that pleasure and make it better. He would manage to take Will's erotic dreams one step further, to make them a reality.

Will sat up in bed, his heart pounding. Suddenly, all he wanted was to see Hannibal; he was sure that his lover had plans for the two of them this morning, and he couldn't wait to find out what they were. Whatever those plans happened to be, he would join in with them wholeheartedly.

New Experience

Chapter Summary

He's finally made it into Hannibal's bed, but Will discovers that he's more than a little wary about being there.

Will turned over in bed, blinking at the bright sunlight that filtered through the window. He'd almost drifted back to sleep, but he was sure that he had heard the sound of quiet footsteps in the hallway outside the room, and he knew that it could be no one but Hannibal.

His heart rate quickened at the thought. Hannibal obviously hadn't slept here last night -- so would he be coming here to take his pleasure in the early morning hours?

If he was, then Will would give him whatever he wanted. He didn't have the strength to refuse; when it came to Hannibal, he seemed to have no will of his own. The other man had an almost eerie kind of control over him -- and Will was discovering that he liked it.

He belonged to Hannibal -- and he could acknowledge that fact freely.

With anyone else, he might have been disconcerted to realize that he felt this way, and he'd probably have run from that feeling. But with Hannibal, the thought of being *owned* only evoked an excitement that a part of him was obscurely ashamed of.

He shouldn't be ashamed of feeling that way about his lover, should he? He didn't know just where that feeling of shame came from; he'd have to dissect it later, study his feelings more closely to determine exactly why they were there, and if they were valid.

But for now, all he could focus on was the fact that Hannibal was right outside that door, and that anything could happen between them this morning.

After all, he'd spent the night in Hannibal's bed last night -- even if Hannibal hadn't been there with him. They'd had sex in this bed, and that had been a significant step forward in their relationship. Hannibal thought enough of him to finally take him to his bed.

He jumped slightly when the door opened and Hannibal strode into the room, wearing the silk robe he'd put on last night. Will wondered where he'd slept -- and even *if* he'd slept. But he must have; he looked well-rested, a small smile on his lips as he looked down at Will.

"Good morning, sweet William. I trust you slept well." The words were bland, but they belied the fire that was sparking in Hannibal's gaze. Will almost wanted to pull the covers over himself, even though they already hid his body from the waist down.

He nodded, swallowing hard. Hannibal obviously had something planned; he already knew that look far too well. Whatever it was, it was to be something exciting.

He didn't want to feel that kind of excitement. Not now. He had to go to work today; he'd told Jack that he'd be in his office by ten in the morning, and that they could go over the case they'd been working on, even go back to the crime scene if Jack thought it would be helpful.

But it didn't seem as though Hannibal would let him get out of the house easily.

"Yeah, I slept great. Thanks for letting me spend the night here. I don't think I'd have been able to sleep at all if I was at home." The words came tumbling out in a rush; it was obvious that he was babbling in an attempt to put up some kind of barrier between them.

"Then you'll be refreshed for the day." In one quick movement, Hannibal reached down to sweep the covers back, baring Will's nude body to his gaze. "Turn over, Will."

Will stared up at him, blue eyes wide with apprehension. "Y-you want to have sex *now*?" he asked, his voice barely a squeak. "B-but it's barely ...." He glanced up at the wall clock. "It's only seven in the morning. I just woke up. I --"

He was silenced by Hannibal's finger against his lips. The other man shook his head, a slight frown marring his brow. "Will, when I tell you to do something, I expect to be obeyed. You should know that by now. Don't be afraid. I'm not going to hurt you."

"I didn't think you would," Will mumbled, doing as he was told and reluctantly turning over onto his stomach. He could feel a blush suffusing his face; he didn't know why he should be so embarrassed. It wasn't like his lover hadn't gotten a good look at his ass before.

He felt the mattress sag under Hannibal's weight as the other man straddled him.

Will had no idea what Hannibal was going to do, but he could feel a wave of apprehension sweeping over hm. Had he been misled as to Hannibal's intentions towards him? Had Hannibal lied when he said that he wasn't going to hurt him? What did he plan to do?

If Hannibal wanted to take him from behind again, he didn't have a problem with that. He'd thoroughly enjoyed last night -- and even the first time, when Hannibal had taken his virginity with him bent over the office desk, there had been a thrill of pleasure in the experience.

It just didn't seem like the best time for them to get intimate. But if that was what Hannibal wanted, that was what he would get. Will knew that he had no willpower to say no to this man; Hannibal would be able to talk him into anything, even if he felt hesitant at first.

Hannibal shifted his position as he removed his robe; Wall frowned, wanting to wriggle into a more comfortable position, waiting for Hannibal to touch him.

"Yes, this should do nicely." Hannibal's voice was full of satisfaction; Will felt a shiver run down his spine, a shiver that was equal parts anticipation and dread. What was "this" that Hannibal was referring to? Did he dare to look around to see what his lover was doing?

"You haven't exactly been as obedient as you should be, Will," Hannibal said softly, placing a hand on the small of Will's back. "I'm afraid you're going to have to be taught a lesson. You need to know exactly who you belong to. I've decided that lesson will be today."

A lesson? That didn't sound pleasant. In fact, it sounded downright scary.

"Wh-what do you mean?" Will asked, his voice trembling. His body was starting to follow suit; he wondered if Hannibal realized that those words were more than a little frightening. They sounded like a thereat, and Will was sure that whenever Hannibal threatened, he would follow through.

"Don't be afraid, Will," Hannibal said again, his tone reassuring. His hand stroked up Will's back, then down again to rest on the curve of his ass. "This isn't going to hurt. It may be a bit uncomfortable at first, until you get used to it -- but not overly painful."

Not overly painful? Will struggled to turn his head, wanting to make eye contact, to know what Hannibal was planning. But Hannibal's hand was in his hair, forcing him to keep his face turned forward even as those long, cool fingers stroked through his hair, then down his back again.

"You need to be taught obedience, Will," Hannibal told him, his voice louder this time, carrying more than a hint of disapproval. "I think this should do the trick."

"Wh-what are you going to do to me?" Will's voice was shaking now; without realizing it, his fingers had curled around a handful of the pillowcase, and he was clutching it in a death grip. No matter what Hannibal had said to reassure him, this didn't sound like a good experience.

"I'm going to show you just who you belong to."

He wanted to scream that he *knew* who he belonged to, that he was Hannibal's, that his lover could do whatever he wanted with him. But wasn't that was he was already doing? Saying those words wouldn't thwart Hannibal's plans; they would only give him clearance to carry on.

Hannibal leaned forward, reaching for the tube of lubricant on the table by the bed where he'd left it last night. Will heard the cap being opened, then silence.

His muscles tightened, his body fighting the need to lash out, to jump off the bed, grab his clothes, and run away. Hannibal was his lover; Hannibal wouldn't hurt him. He might push the edges of Will's boundaries, and even go past them -- but he would never cause him harm.

There was nothing to be afraid of. Absolutely nothing. This would be a new experience, that was all. It could even be something he would enjoy.

Then why was he so afraid?

Will closed his eyes, forcing himself to lie still under Hannibal's hands. Whatever was going to happen, he would have to put himself into this man's hands, and trust him. This was a test of their relationship, a test of his trust, and he wasn't going to let himself fail.

Intrusion

Chapter Summary

> Of all the things Will might have expected Hannibal to do to him, this wasn't one of them.

Will gasped as Hannibal slid two fingers inside him; this was already something new. Before, Hannibal had been more careful with him, only inserting one finger at a time. This time, he was rough, using his fingers to stretch Will before he was ready.

He buried his face in the pillow, determined not to cry out. If Hannibal knew that he was already having doubts about this, he'd probably turn away in disgust, and their relationship would be over.

No matter how much this might hurt at first, he had to work through the pain. It had hurt the first time he and Hannibal had sex, too, but he'd learned that the pain could quickly turn to pleasure. This would as well, if he could just grit his teeth through the more painful part.

A third finger joined the others, and Will winced as he was stretched. He hadn't expected that, but Hannibal obviously wanted to make sure he was well-prepared for whatever he intended to do. Though if it was sex, this seemed like overkill.

Maybe it wasn't sex. Maybe it was something that would *really* hurt.

For just a moment, Will felt panic sweep over him. Had he completely misjudged Hannibal? Did this man mean to do him some kind of harm? Would he actually walk out of here and go to work today, just like any other day -- or would he never see the outside world again?

Don't be ridiculous, he told himself firmly. *He's not going to kill me. He's making sure this isn't going to hurt too badly. I can't fault him for that.*

Still, he couldn't help being apprehensive about just what it was that Hannibal planned to do to him. But he knew better than to ask questions; Hannibal might encourage that in their psychiatric sessions, but that definitely wasn't something to do in the bedroom.

Hannibal's fingers pulled out of him just as abruptly as they'd entered; Will almost gasped again at the sudden emptiness he felt. He wanted to turn his head to see what Hannibal would do next, but he knew that would only annoy his lover.

"Close your eyes and take a deep breath, Will," Hannibal instructed him, his tone clipped.

Will did as he was told, trying to control the trembling that wanted to take him over. He didn't know what his lover had planned, but whatever it was, he would have to put himself into

Hannibal's hands and trust him. He really didn't have any other choice.

His eyes flew open when he felt something large and blunt pressing against his entrance, something that most definitely was *not* Hannibal's cock. That was what he'd expected, but this was something far different, something that felt as though it could rip him apart.

He took another deep breath, trying to relax as Hannibal had told him to. Whatever this was, he had to trust that it wouldn't hurt him if Hannibal was doing it.

The object pushed further into him, and he couldn't hold back a soft cry. It was bigger than Hannibal's cock, bigger than anything that had been inside him before. The only thing he had to compare it to was Hannibal's fingers and cock, and it was more painful than either.

"Hannibal, it .... hurts," Will moaned, squeezing his eyes tightly closed. "Stop. Please."

The intrusion wasn't removed from his body, but it stopped pushing into him. Will felt a hand on the small of his back, then Hannibal's fingers were stroking over his skin, soothing him. That hand moved down to the curve of his ass, then moved to rest on his hip.

"Just try to relax your muscles, Will." Hannibal's voice was softer now, more gentle. "It's only an anal plug. It isn't much bigger than I am, and you are certainly used to having me inside you. Just take deep breaths, and concentrate on letting your body relax and accept it."

A plug? He hadn't expected that. He hadn't thought that Hannibal would be the sort of man to be into sex toys, but if this was what he wanted, then Will would try to see it through. He'd often wondered what it would be like to experiment with something like this -- now he was finding out.

He nodded, closing his eyes again and pillowing his head on his arms. The plug pushed deeper inside him, but this time, he managed to hold back his moan.

It didn't *really* hurt all that badly, not if he kept taking deep breaths. And at some point, his body would get used to the feeling of having something so big inside him -- wouldn't it? He'd gotten used to taking his lover's cock, so this couldn't be much different.

He could get used to anything. He would get used to this.

If only it didn't feel so *big* inside him, Will thought, gasping as the plug pushed in even more deeply. It wasn't exactly painful, but it was stretching him more than he'd thought it could; he wasn't sure if he'd be able to keep it inside him for long.

But he'd try, since Hannibal wanted him to. Even if he had to grit his teeth and deal with some pain, he would manage to do it to make the other man happy.

He wouldn't have even tried to do this for anyone else -- but then, no one else would have been able to get past his guard to be this intimate with him. If any of the people he'd had those stumbling, fumbling relationships with in the past had even tired, he would have run in the other direction.

No, Hannibal was the only person he would ever trust with something like this. And even now, he wasn't sure that he could give Hannibal his complete trust. There were still unanswered questions lurking in dark corners of his mind, questions that needed answers.

Finally, after what seemed like far too long, the inexorable pushing stopped; he could feel Hannibal sitting back on his heels, feel the other man's gaze on him. That cool hand moved up his back and then down again to rest on his ass, just above where the plug entered him.

"You don't know how lovely you look," Hannibal murmured, his voice soft.

Lovely? That wasn't the way he would describe himself, but if Hannibal wanted to see him in that way, then he would accept the compliment. Will didn't know what to say, so he remained silent, forcing himself tie still, even though he wanted to squirm with discomfort.

"It shouldn't take your body long to adjust to being filled," Hannibal told him, his tone firm. "You'll have a long day ahead of you, so I'll give you time to become accustomed to it."

"Wh-what?" Will wasn't sure that he'd heard correctly. Hannibal expected him to have this thing inside him *all day*? While he was working? He couldn't do that. It would be far too much of a distraction; he'd have to struggle to keep his mind on what he was doing.

"You've got to be kidding me," he added as he felt the other man shift his position, then move off the bed to stand up. He slowly rolled over, wincing at the feeling of the plug inside him. Will gasped as his movement made it brush against his prostate, his eyes widening.

There was no way he could deal with this all day. It would drive him crazy -- and he'd probably have to find a private place to ease the tension more than once.

Hannibal couldn't be serious. This was going too far.

"Of course I'm not." Hannibal shook his head, crossing his arms over his chest and looking down at Will with a frown on his face. "You *will* wear that plug today. And any other day that I say you will. You need to learn obedience, William. As well as leaning who you belong to."

Will wanted to answer that assertion with angry words, to tell Hannibal that he didn't belong to anyone -- but those words stuck in his throat. He *did* belong to Hannibal. He had surrendered himself to this man, body and soul; there was no sense in denying that fact.

"B-but .... it's going to be way too much of a distraction when I'm working," he said, searching for some way to convince Hannibal that he couldn't do this. It was too much.

"Nevertheless, you will do it," Hannibal snapped, his tone becoming angry. "Do not think to defy me, Will. Not if you want the relationship we have to continue. I will not deal with defiance. It's your choice as to whether you want us to continue, or end here and now."

Will closed his eyes, swallowing hard. Of course he didn't want them to end, and Hannibal knew it. His lover literally had him by the balls; there was no way that he could walk away from what he and Hannibal shared, and the other man damn well knew it.

"O-okay," he agreed, his voice trembling. "I'll try."

Hannibal's lips curved into a smile; his lover leaned over him, raising a hand to stroke Will's cheek. "Good boy. I think this may work to bring us even closer together, Will."

How in the hell was this going to bring them closer? He doubted the veracity of Hannibal's words, but he nodded again, gingerly sitting up and gasping again as the plug pushed deeper inside him. Clearly, this was going to take some getting used to.

Will only hoped that he would be able to control his reactions to the stimulation while he was working. He didn't want anyone else to guess what was going on; if they did, then he'd have to make up some explanation that was sure to sound lame -- and wouldn't be believed.

"You still have a while to get dressed," Hannibal told him, glancing at the clock on the wall. "That should give you enough time to get used to the sensation. Come downstairs when you're ready, so I can feed you breakfast before you go to work. You must be hungry."

Will could only nod as he watched his lover walk out of the room. He got to his feet, gasping again as more pressure was applied to his prostate. At this rate, he was going to have a long day ahead of him -- a day that would probably be filled with surprises.

He wasn't ready to deal with this, but apparently, he didn't have a choice.

What did Hannibal think he was going to accomplish with this? Obviously, he wanted to be obeyed; Will had no problem with giving him obedience, if the circumstances demanded it. But Hannibal apparently wanted him to be an obedient partner even when they weren't together.

Well, if that was that Hannibal wanted, that was what he would get. Will knew that if he balked at this, he'd be thrown away as though their intimacy had never happened.

He couldn't deal with that, so he would play along, no matter how difficult that might prove to be. Slowly, he moved across the room to where his overnight bag was, knowing that he had to get dressed and get down to the kitchen before Hannibal came looking for him.

Pride Before A Fall

Chapter Summary

Will hasn't been able to stop thinking of Hannibal -- but he refuses to swallow his pride and admit his need.

Will straightened up slowly from where he had bent over to have a closer look at the murder victim; for just a moment, he could swear that he saw stars. He had to wait a few seconds until his head cleared to step back slowly, shaking his head.

Damn Hannibal and his insistence on Will wearing that plug all day. Even now, after the day was nearly over, he still wasn't comfortable with it.

He'd already had to duck into the nearest restroom twice during the day and jerk himself off; he only hoped that the rest of the team hadn't realized what he was doing. If they did, then there was going to be a lot of talk -- and a lot of teasing from them tomorrow.

He didn't think anyone had realized, fortunately. Though the second time he'd excused himself and practically run for the nearest bathroom, he could sense Jack's gaze following him, and the older man had looked speculative when he'd returned.

Jack couldn't possibly know what was going on. He might *guess* that there was something making Will physically uncomfortable, but that was as far as it went. There was no way that he could know exactly what the trouble was.

If he did, then the man was a damned mind reader, Will thought sourly.

He certainly wasn't going to admit just what was going on; that was between himself and Hannibal. And with any luck, this would be a one-time-only thing. He didn't want to have to deal with this kind of discomfort on a daily basis; it was too much of a distraction.

That was exactly what he'd said it would be. But of course, Hannibal hadn't listened, and he'd broken down and caved to Hannibal's demands.

That had been a mistake. He realized it now; he should have protested against this, should have been more firm about not letting their personal relationship interfere with his work. But it was too late for that now; he'd have to deal with the repercussions of not being bold enough.

Really, it hadn't interfered with his work all that much, if he was going to be honest about it. He'd just been uncomfortable all day, and he was sure that fact had been remarked upon. It wasn't hard for everyone he worked with to see that he wasn't .... well, feeling quite himself.

For one thing, he didn't usually walk around with a noticeable erection.

It had been impossible to hide the bulge in his jeans; it seemed to grow more prominent every time he moved and the plug pressed more firmly against his prostate. At first, he'd been afraid that he would climax then and there, and embarrass himself publicly.

So far, that hadn't happened -- but he had no idea what the rest of the day could hold. He still had to get through a few more hours before he could go home.

No, he couldn't go home. He would be going directly to Hannibal's house when he left work; this had to stop,and it had to stop as soon as possible. He couldn't deal with much more of this; it would drive him crazy if he didn't have this plug out of him.

Will closed his eyes, his breath catching in his throat as a thought crossed his mind. Yes, he wanted the plug out of him -- but he wanted Hannibal inside him. He wanted to be naked under Hannibal, writhing in pleasure, his limbs wrapped around the other man's body.

He was hooked on Hannibal, much more so than he would admit aloud. Even without this added stimulus to remind him of his lover on a constant basis, his thoughts were never far from Hannibal, always wondering when their next encounter would happen.

All he had to do was close his eyes, and he could almost *feel* Hannibal moving inside him -- though that was probably more due to the plug he was wearing. If he didn't have it out of him soon, he'd have to run for the bathroom again to give himself some relief.

Only Hannibal would think of doing something like this.

One thing he'd learned about his lover was that Hannibal liked these little surprises; they apparently made him feel like he was in charge of any given situation.

He more than likely expected Will to show up at his place later today, groveling and begging to have the plug taken out. But he had too much pride to beg, Will told himself. He would be stubborn to the end, and refuse to give Hannibal the satisfaction of being on his knees.

As much as he needed relief from the constant pressure on his prostate, he wasn't going to beg Hannibal to give him that relief. If Hannibal wanted him to beg, then he would have a long wait before he achieved that goal. Will wasn't going to completely abandon his pride.

What was that old saying about pride coming before a fall? Well, he would hold out and suffer through a lot more of this before he would take a fall. If Hannibal wanted a battle, that was what he would get, no matter what punishment Will might have to suffer later.

Punishment? Why was his mind heading in *that* direction? Will thought with a frown. It wasn't as if his lover was going to *punish* him for not begging. Hannibal wasn't that kind of man. He could be a very demanding lover, but he wasn't cruel.

Wasn't he? Suddenly, Will wasn't so sure about that. He'd seen glimpses beneath that smooth, polished exterior, enough to tell him that he didn't know what the *real* Hannibal was like.

In truth, he didn't really know Hannibal at all.

Hannibal Lecter might be his lover, but he was as much of an enigma to Will as he'd been when they first met. They had been intimate; they had shared their bodies, shared moments that Will wouldn't even consider having with anyone else. But Hannibal had never opened up to him.

He had told Hannibal things about himself that he would never have told anyone else. He trusted Hannibal, more than he'd ever thought he could trust anyone. But Hannibal obviously didn't feel the same way about him; he'd never let Will see behind his barriers.

Oh, those walls shifted now and then to give Will intriguing glimpses of the man who was his lover, but not much else. He didn't know anything about Hannibal's past, about what his life had been like when he was a child, or even what he thought about their relationship.

He was sure that Hannibal *needed* him; there was something in him that was drawn to Will, just as Will was drawn to him. He didn't really know *how* he had come by that knowledge; maybe it was in the way that Hannibal looked at him when they were at their most intimate.

Yes, Hannibal *needed* him, but need wasn't an emotion. Will didn't want to simply be needed by the man he was involved with. He wanted more than that.

A part of him wanted Hannibal to surrender his pride and admit to that need, just as Will had. But Hannibal would never do that, and Will knew it. He was far too proud a man to admit to having a need for anyone; he probably wouldn't even admit it to himself.

In that way, they were more alike than they appeared to be.

He almost hated to admit that they were a lot alike in that respect; he hated admitting that he was too proud to break down and give in when it would be best for him to do so. But he was too honest to try to pull the wool over his own eyes.

He had admitted that he needed Hannibal -- but had he ever actually said those words aloud to his lover? Will didn't think so; if he had, he'd done so in a moment of passion that he couldn't remember. But he was fairly sure that he'd kept his neediness to himself.

Of course, Hannibal had probably guessed at it -- he was good at ferreting out Will's feelings, even if they weren't expressed in so many words. It was as though Hannibal could see into his heart and soul, as though he was capable of knowing what Will was thinking.

A shiver went through him at that thought. It was scary, knowing that his emotions could be so open to another person, when he wasn't sure of them himself a lot of the time.

Jack was heading in his direction, a determined expression on his face; Will sighed inwardly, trying to prepare himself for the questions that would probably be forthcoming. The last thing he wanted to do was deal with Jack's questions now; he wasn't mentally ready for them.

Jack stopped in front of him, his gaze moving down Will's body, then back up to his face.

"You're really not yourself today, are you?" he asked, his voice dry. His gaze flickered down to Will's crotch again; Will had the distinct impression that Jack was referring to his obvious

erection. Why in the *hell* was Jack looking at that part of his body, anyway?

He didn't want to think about what the answer to *that* question could be. If Jack thought about him in a sexual way, Will didn't want to know. Jack was his boss; he might engage in a torrid affair with the man who was his unofficial psychiatrist, but not someone he worked closely with.

"Will, you should go home," Jack told him, his voice more gentle than Will had expected it to be. "You need to get some rest, take care of yourself. Go home and get some sleep, and then come back and look at all this with fresh eyes. You're no good to anybody in this state."

Will nodded, running a hand through his hair. Jack was right. He wasn't doing himself any good by being here, and he certainly wasn't going to get any insight into this murder when all he could focus on was the plug in his ass and how it was making him feel.

"Yeah, you're right," he said with a sigh. "I need to go home and rest. Thanks, Jack. I'll be better tomorrow. I just need to get away from it all for a little while."

Jack nodded, turning away without another word. Will was glad that he hadn't said anything; that look had been more than enough to let him know that it wouldn't be a good idea to show up at another crime scene in an obviously aroused state.

Damn Hannibal, anyway. This was all due to him.

Now he felt angry, as well as embarrassed. He hadn't asked for this; it wasn't something he'd wanted. It was something that Hannibal had *forced* on him; he might have agreed to it, but he hadn't realized all of the consequences it would have.

Leaving the crime scene, he headed for his car, checking his watch. It wasn't too early to go to Hannibal's; in fact, it was nearly the time he would have chosen to leave anyway, so it wasn't as though Hannibal wouldn't be expecting him to show up sometime soon.

Oh, how he wanted to walk into his lover's office and demand that this little game stop here and now, and that it never be played again.

But he wouldn't do that, Will thought with a sigh. He would swallow his pride, and *ask* Hannibal to stop this. He'd explain that it interfered with his work.

He could only hope that Hannibal would listen to him. Pride might come before a fall, but he was willing to forsake that pride if it meant that he'd never have to deal with another day like this one. Still, he couldn't help feeling that somehow, he was going to come out on the losing end.

Freedom of Choice

Chapter Summary

Will knows that he needs to draw a line between his personal life and his work, bit that's more easily said than done.

Will raised his hand to knock on the front door of Hannibal's house, then smiled wryly and reached for his keys. He'd been given a key to the house; which made it ridiculous to knock. But there were times when he forgot that he'd been given that entrée into Hannibal's life.

And why shouldn't he have it? he thought to himself. He was Hannibal's lover. He spent nearly as much time here now as he did at home, so he *should* have a key.

Still, it seemed like a major breakthrough in his relationship with Hannibal to be able to come and go from this house as he pleased. There were still some rooms that were locked to him, but he didn't want to pry. In time, he would share *all* of Hannibal's secrets.

After all, Hannibal already shared pretty much all of his.

Sighing softly, he inserted the key into the lock, blushing as he realized what it made him think of. Himself and Hannibal, entwined in that huge bed upstairs, Hannibal's cock thrusting deep inside him. Him crying out for more, begging Hannibal not to stop ....

He had to stop thinking like that, or it would drive him insane. That was all he'd been able to think about all damn day, instead of focusing on his work. He felt as though his thoughts had somehow been invaded, his freedom to choose what to focus on taken away from him.

Hannibal had taken that away, and this game was going to stop. He had to draw the line somewhere, and he drew that line where his work started and his personal life ended.

He'd never had to do that before, because he'd never *had* a personal life since he had started working for the FBI. But now that he did, he wanted to keep the two of them separate. For all intents and purposes, his personal life ended when he was at work.

If he didn't view things that way, then he would have some serious problems. He couldn't let Hannibal be in his thoughts constantly; his couldn't let his mind drift. He had to focus on getting inside the minds of the killers he chased; if he didn't, then he wouldn't have a job.

Well, not one where he did this much good, anyway.

Unlocking the front door, he opened it and stepped through, then made sure it was locked before pocketing his keys and heading for Hannibal's office. They were going to have to talk about what he'd dealt with today, and he wasn't particularly looking forward to it.

Hannibal wanted him to be submissive, and that was fine with hm. But he couldn't let his life with Hannibal, a life that he was going to have to keep behind closed doors, start interfering with his work. That would only be a recipe for complete disaster.

He could play this two ways, Will told himself. He could be petulant and angry, or he could try to be diplomatic. The latter would definitely be the better choice.

"Hello, Will." Hannibal looked up as Will entered the room, a small smile curving his lips. "I've been expecting you. I hope you had a pleasant day." There was nothing in his tone to indicate that this day should have been different from any other.

Will almost felt angry; he had to clench his fists at his sides and take a deep breath before he could speak. He had to make Hannibal understand that a line had been crossed.

"I can't do this again, Hannibal. Mixing up my personal life with my work crosses a line that I can't cross. I know it's all fun and games to you, but today I was trying to get inside the mind of a killer, to catch someone who's been hurting people. And I couldn't do it because of .... you know."

His voice had started out a bit hesitant, but as Will spoke, his words gathered strength. "This is one game I can't play. I'll do pretty much anything else, but I can't let what I'm doing with you cross the line into my work. It's too important to me."

"I was given to understand that what you and I share is important to you, as well."

Hannibal's tone sounded mild, but Will could sense the annoyance underneath the words. He supposed that he didn't blame Hannibal; after all, the man was used to being obeyed, that was obvious. Having someone say no to him in any way more than likely didn't sit well with him.

"It does," Will said, swallowing hard. "It means a lot to me. But so does my work. And I can't let the two of them mix again. Not if it's going to affect how I do my job. It's not just my personal comfort that's at stake there. I have a job to do, one that I can't let anything interfere with."

That small smile on Hannibal's face had been replaced now with a slight frown; he stared at Will as though assessing him, then slowly, he nodded.

"I suppose you are right about that. I hadn't considered that your work doesn't leave room for distractions. I'm sorry that I caused you such problems," he said, his voice very soft. "But can you deny that a part of you enjoyed knowing that you were so owned, Will?"

Will stood still for a few moments, biting his lip and considering his answer. He knew that he couldn't lie to Hannibal; this man would see right through any denial he might put forth, and besides, he didn't *want* to lie. Not to Hannibal.

"No," he finally said, shaking his head. "A part of me *did* like it. I'll admit that."

"Good." Hannibal stood up and came toward him, stopping in front of him and placing his hands on Will's shoulders. "It's good for you to lose your freedom of choice once in a while,

Will. It teaches you that you don't always have the upper hand in any given situation."

"I never thought that I did," Will protested, shaking his head. "I wouldn't ever believe that I had the upper hand when it comes to anything you want."

"It's a good thing for you to realize that," Hannibal told him, dropping his hands from Will's shoulders, his voice becoming brisk. "Now, we need to go to your house so you can pack a bag. You're going to be staying here for a few days, until this situation is cleared up."

Will nodded, relieved that Hannibal hadn't chosen to contest his words. If he had, then Will would have had a hard time convincing him that he wasn't going to deal with any more games like this one. Somehow, Hannibal had a way of convincing him that *he* was in the wrong.

If his lover had declared that this wasn't the last time Will would have to mix his personal life with his work, then he would have been able to convince Will to back down on his stance. He simply couldn't say no to this man. He had no freedom of choice where Hannibal was concerned.

No one else could have convinced him to play this game again, but Hannibal had some kind of magic hidden in his honeyed words. He could talk Will into almost anything.

Almost being the operative word, Will thought dryly.

That silver tongue hadn't worked this time, but Will had no doubt that when Hannibal wanted something from him in the future, it would. He was putty in this man's hands, malleable clay that could be shaped any way that Hannibal wished it to be. And they both knew it.

"I need to feed the dogs, too," Will said, shoving his hands into his pockets and taking another deep breath. "But first, can you take this thing out of me? I've been really uncomfortable all day, and I don't want it to, errr, hinder anything we might do tonight."

"Oh, nothing we do tonight will be hindered in any way, sweet William." Hannibal's words were confident as he shook his head, moving towards the foyer. "You don't have to worry about that. I don't intend to let anything get in the way of my plans for the evening."

Those words made Will's throat tighten; he had no idea what Hannibal might be planning, but he couldn't help wondering if it was going to be less than pleasant for him.

He didn't know how to answer that assertion; Hannibal had spoken the words with such confidence that there didn't seem to be anything else he *could* say. But it was fairly obvious that Hannibal didn't intend to remove the plug until he was ready to do so.

Will had to suppress a sigh at that thought. He wanted this thing out of him, but that wasn't going to happen any time soon. Hannibal had made that clear, even without saying anything that directly touched on the subject. He was good at that.

Once again, Will's freedom of choice had been taken away from him, without Hannibal even saying a word about it. It was apparently taken for granted that Will *had* no choice.

So he would just have to wait a while for the discomfort to end.

He could do that, Will told himself, biting down on his lower lip. He'd put up with it all day; a few more hours probably wouldn't make a difference, though if he was sore tonight, then Hannibal had only himself to blame for that. He should know better than to damage his toys.

Toys? Will thought, surprised at the word his ow mind had used to describe himself. Did he think of himself as nothing more than a toy for Hannibal to play with while it amused him, and then throw it away? Surely he thought more of himself than *that*.

If he didn't, then he was in some serious trouble when it came to this relationship.

Silently, Will followed Hannibal to the door. He would go to his own home, pack some clothes into an overnight bag, feed the dogs, and then come back here and be whatever Hannibal wanted him to be for the evening. He seemed to have no choice in that matter.

If he gave up his freedom of choice in this matter, how much more would he be talked into giving up in the future? Will wanted to argue, to protest, but he knew that it would do no good. Arguing would only make his lover angry, and make him even more intractable.

Hannibal wasn't the kind of man one toyed with. Will couldn't help feeling that if he asserted himself about this even a tiny bit more, his lover could very well turn on him.

With a sigh, he dug his keys out of his pocket as he followed Hannibal out to the car. At some point, they were going to have to talk about this -- but he still had the definite feeling that he would *not* be the one coming out on the winning end of the discussion.

The Devil To Pay

Chapter Summary

Neither Will nor Hannibal realizes that going to Will's house, even for a brief visit, is inviting trouble.

Will straightened up from where he'd been kneeling on the kitchen floor to pet the dogs after he'd fed them, smiling at their foolish attempts to jump up and lick his face. They'd obviously missed him, but he couldn't be at home alone right now.

As long as he and Hannibal came here every evening to let the dogs out for a run and feed them, they would be all right until all of this was over and he could come back home safely. At the moment, it was too dangerous for him to be here when he had a stalker.

Hannibal had pointed out that if he chose to live closer to civilization, he would be able to stay at home, as it would be much easier for a friend to stay with him.

But Will had balked at that suggestion. He liked being out here in the country.

No, that wasn't it, he told himself. He liked living in the middle of nowhere, yes -- but it was more that he liked being alone. He liked feeling isolated; he was used to it. Driving into the city to go to work, and to be with his lover, was enough city life for him.

He didn't want to spend all of his time there, feeling hemmed in by houses and concrete roads on all sides. He liked the feeling of being in the wild out here in Wolf Trap, of being surrounded by nature. Even if it *was* a little lonely at times.

He wanted to spend more time with Hannibal, but that could be easily managed. It wouldn't be hard to divide his time between being here at home, enjoying his privacy an solitude, and being with the man who was becoming his rock in a swiftly changing universe.

Maybe he shouldn't be so dependent on Hannibal, Will thought with a soft sigh. It wasn't healthy for him to be so focused on one person. And it was a scary feeling, that dependence.

Maybe some people would say that he was falling in love.

That thought almost made him gasp aloud; he hadn't considered it before. Well, he *had*, but only in passing, and it had seemed like such a ridiculous idea that he'd pushed it out of his mind immediately. Falling in love? Him? With Hannibal? No.

But there *was* something growing between them, even though Will didn't believe that it could be neatly packaged in one simple four-letter word. He didn't believe in love -- not really. And falling in love with Hannibal was an idea that somehow seemed .... well, terrifying.

Hannibal already knew so much about him; he'd more or less told this man everything about his life. The only thing Hannibal didn't know about was some of his disturbing inner desires -- and Will couldn't help feeling that, sooner or later, he'd discover those as well.

Staying with Hannibal might be a mistake. It might let the other man get too close to him, and it might make him even more dependent than he already was.

Still, that seemed to be the only option at the moment. Staying here wouldn't be safe; he doubted that his stalker would hurt the dogs, but if Will was here alone, he'd be in far too vulnerable a position. It was better to be safe than sorry.

He had no idea who this person was, or what they planned to do to him. And really, he didn't want to find out the latter. It was frightening enough to know that someone was after him; he didn't want their intentions spelled out in any kind of gory detail.

He just wanted them caught so he could feel safe again.

Will turned back towards Hannibal, surprised to find the other man on his feet and heading for the stairs. He turned to look at Will, raising an eyebrow as he gestured to the second floor of the house, stopping at the foot of the stairs.

"I'm going to pack a bag for you," he said, as though he did this sort of thing every day. "You stay here and relax, Will. You need to spend a bit of time with your dogs. I think they will give you a sense of security, and lift your spirits."

Will nodded, knowing that Hannibal was probably right. He always felt better in the dogs' company; maybe that was why he had so many of them.

He leaned his head back on the couch as Hannibal disappeared up the stairs, closing his eyes. This was the first time in forever that anyone had tried to take care of him -- and he was finding that he liked it. He liked being able to let go of the reins for once, to relinquish control.

Somehow, it didn't feel strange to think of having that control in Hannibal's hands. It was more .... exciting, yes, that would be the word. He didn't know what to expect from Hannibal; that made everything the other man did with him a kind of adventure.

Will took a deep breath, letting himself relax further into the comfortable couch cushions. He didn't notice that the front door had slowly opened, and that the dogs had disappeared outside onto the porch, leaving him alone in the room.

He was out cold seconds after the syringe sank into his upper arm.

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Hannibal took his time packing a bag for Will to bring to his house; he had made up his mind that he wanted the young man to be dressed decently when he left the house to go to work in the mornings. He was taking this opportunity to choose Will's clothes for him.

He told himself that it was mainly because he didn't want Will to leave his home badly dressed, that it would reflect on him. Of course, it wouldn't, but he didn't want to admit that. He needed to make an excuse, even to himself, for why he was picking out what Will would be wearing.

The truth was, he enjoyed having such control over the young man's life. It pleased him to know that Will was learning to defer to him in all things.

Well, probably not *all* things, Hannibal amended. But Will certainly deferred to him in matters of style and taste; he obviously had the better judgment when it came to such things, and Will was intelligent enough to know that and to accept the fact.

He looked up when he heard the front door slam, a frown on his face. He hadn't told Will that he could go back outside; he had no reason to be doing so.

Going to the window, Hannibal looked out -- and froze in place for a few moments.

A man wearing a ski mask was carrying an obviously unconscious Will to his car, opening the back door and throwing the young man's motionless body inside. Before Hannibal could make a move, he'd slammed the door and gotten into the front seat, revving the engine.

Before Hannibal's frozen muscles could move, before he could do so much a raise a hand, the car sped off, quickly disappearing in a cloud of dust.

"Will!" Hannibal knew that calling out his young lover's name would do nothing to stop what was happening; it was instinctive, a word that slipped from his mouth before he could stop it. There was nothing he could do; he was already too late.

For a moment, a feeling of panic swept over him. Who was this man? Where was he taking Will? And more importantly, how could he be caught and stopped before he did something to Will? All those questions raced through his mind in a matter of seconds.

Turning away from the window, Hannibal pulled out his cell phone, scrolling to Jack Crawford's number. He had to call Jack immediately and tell him what had happened.

At the moment, it seemed that Jack was Will's best hope of being rescued.

But Hannibal knew that he would try to find Will himself. And when -- not if -- *when* he did, he would make the man who had kidnapped his lover suffer as much as possible before he dispatched the bastard to another realm.

He would take great pleasure in doing so, he told himself grimly. No one touched what belonged to him -- and Will Graham was *his*. No one else had the right to touch him, to do anything to him. If Will was harmed in any way, there would be the devil to pay.

Hannibal *was* that devil. He knew millions of ways to make a human being suffer -- and once he caught this man, he would use them all, to great effect.

He would find Will, with or without the FBI's help. And once he did, he would make sure that his lover was safe and whole before he sent the man who had put Will's life in jeopardy

to his own private hell -- and a few others along the way, as well.

No one took what was his. No one.

His hand clenched on the phone as he waited for Jack to answer. When the voice mail kicked in, Hannibal cursed and closed the phone without leaving a message. He would tell Jack what was going on -- but first, he was going to do a little detecting of his own.

He would find Will. He would find him and bring the man who had kidnapped him to his own particular brand of justice, which would be swift and sure.

When he had his quarry cornered, that justice would be terrible indeed.

Conquering Hero

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is thrust into the position of having to be a hero.

Hannibal slammed the phone on his desk down, holding back the curses that rose to his lips. He should have known that Jack Crawford and the FBI were the most useless when they were needed the most. They weren't getting anywhere at all.

It had been nearly forty-eight hours since Will had been kidnapped, and they had no leads whatsoever on who could have taken him, or where he was.

Forty-eight hours, and there was no telling what could have happened to Will, of what that bastard might be doing to him even at this very moment. Hannibal had never felt so helpless; his fists curled in impotent fury, his mind racing through possibilities.

if this man's intent had been to kidnap Will, then maybe he would simply hold the young man captive and demand a ridiculously expensive ransom for him. Hannibal could pay that; it would be no problem. He would pay any amount of money to have Will back safely.

Since when had Will Graham come to mean so much to him?

If it was anyone else who had been abducted, he would express the proper amount of concern, but he would most definitely not be willing to go out of his way to secure their safe release. But with Will's life hanging in the balance, he felt unsettled, almost frantic.

Losing Will was not an option. No one was going to take what he considered his possessions away from him -- and Will Graham *belonged* to him. He would somehow find the man who had taken Will and make him pay for such a transgression.

But first, he had to find out where Will had been taken -- and without a clue as to where that might be, he was effectively powerless. He had nowhere to begin.

He needed for Will's abductor to somehow reach out to him, for the man to *want* him to know what he had donw with Will. Hannibal was almost positive that this man did indeed want him to know what was going on -- which was exactly the reason he had taken Will.

It was obvious that Will's captor wanted him -- but there was also an underlying reason for why he had taken Will so boldly, when he knew that Hannibal would be witness to the abduction. He had wanted Hannibal to know that he had been able to take what wasn't his.

Will's kidnapping had been a deliberate gesture, a throwing down of the gauntlet.

Hannibal had no doubt that this man had seen everything that he and Will had done -- if not with his own eyes, then he had guessed what was happening, and had let himself imagine the two of them together. He might even have been able to see some encounters.

After all, he hadn't exactly been careful about pulling the curtains closed. He couldn't remember if they had been open when he had taken Will over the desk in the office, and on the couch. He was almost certain that the curtains in the bedroom hadn't been closed.

And when he had painted that erotic picture of Will .... there was no way to be certain, but he was almost sure that the curtains had been opened that night.

Yes, there had been plenty of chances for Will's stalker to see how their relationship had progressed. It had probably fanned the flames of the man's anger -- he obviously wanted Will for himself in the physical sense, but there was something more, something deeper.

There was no doubt that this man considered himself to be in competition with Hannibal for Will's affections. And though Will would never turn away from him and give himself to another -- Hannibal was positive of that -- he wasn't in a position now where he would have free will.

Will was in more danger than either of them had thought would come to him. And it seemed that Hannibal might now be the only person who could save him from that danger, the only one who might have the power to find his abductor and bring him out of there safely.

But where could he begin? He needed a starting point, some clue as to Will's whereabouts.

Hannibal's head jerked up when the doorbell rang; his gaze automatically went to the clock, checking the time, even though he had canceled all of his appointments for the past two days. He didn't want anyone here if he received some word about Will.

He had no idea who could be there; he didn't think that any of his patients would have forgotten that their sessions had been canceled, but that was always a possibility. Sighing, he got to his feet and went to the door, pulling it open and preparing to speak to whoever was there.

No one was at the door. There was nothing but an empty street outside; it didn't look as though anyone had been there in a while. Certainly no one had rung the bell.

No, he had *not* been imagining things, Hannibal told himself firmly. He *had* heard the doorbell ring; there *had* been someone here. Apparently, they had decided to ring the bell and had then left, possibly thinking that he wasn't at home.

But that made no sense; he hadn't taken very long to answer the door. Whoever had been there might be a child playing a prank, but he didn't think so. Something about this felt ominous; there was a certain electricity in the air, a sense of danger that he couldn't quite place.

When he turned his head, he saw it. An envelope that had been taped to the door. He hadn't noticed it when he had opened the door; he hadn't been looking in that direciton. But it was

obviously meant for him -- and it was unmarked. He had no doubt as to who it was from.

Ripping the envelope away, he closed the door and leaned against it for a moment.

Why should he feel this peculiar sense of relief at knowing that Will's captor had gotten in touch with him? this didn't mean that Will was safe. He was probably in greater danger than ever -- and Hannibal would doubtless be expected to walk into danger himself.

He tore the envelope open, annoyed to find that his hands were trembling. He didn't want to believe that he could be so shaken by a communication that he'd been hoping to receive.

The note was brief and to the point:

If you want to see Will Graham alive again, meet me in the basement of 2415 Curzon Street at midnight. If you are not there by the time fixed, the next you see Graham will be in a body bag.

Nothing more than that. The words were concise, almost radiating a coldness that Hannibal could feel through the paper. But they were only words; those words couldn't express any feeling. The could engender it, but the black ink on white paper couldn't convey the writer's emotions.

His own emotions were swirling in his mind, racing through his body. It was as though receiving this missive had released endorphins within him; all he could think of now was how long it would be until midnight, and all of the things he would have to do in preparation to meet this monster.

Of course this man was a monster. There was no telling what he had done to Will, but Hannibal felt grateful to know that his young lover was still alive. At least, he would have to assume that Will still lived, unless this man was lying to him simply to bait a trap.

He had no idea what to expect, but he knew that he had to be sure that he could defend himself -- and Will as well, if that need arose.

Though Hannibal didn't usually like guns, he kept a few, of course. He much preferred to use his own agility, strength, and cunning against any opponents that might come his way, but this wasn't the time to prove his own wiliness in that way. A gun would be much more effective.

A knife would be too unwieldy -- though it would, at a better time, have been his weapon of choice. But this wasn't a time when he could rely on his own expertise with a knife. This man could very well use Will as a human shield -- and he wouldn't take any chances with a knife.

No, it would have to be a gun. He knew exactly which one he would use.

It might not be his weapon of choice, but it didn't seem as though he had much of a choice in this, not if he wanted to charge in and play the hero. And that was what had been thrust upon him. He would come to Will's rescue. He was the only one who had the opportunity to do so.

Jack Crawford obviously couldn't -- or wouldn't -- do anything. And Hannibal wasn't going to go to him with this information. He didn't trust Jack enough.

Jack would hesitate, put off going to Will's rescue until he had more information -- and that could prove fatal for Will. It wasn't that Jack was afraid to simply jump in with both feet before looking both ways -- it was that he didn't seem to think enough of Will to throw caution to the winds.

Well, *he* certainly thought enough of Will to do just that, Hannibal told himself. He wasn't going to hesitate. He was going to jump right in, and worry about the consequences later. He was going to rescue his lover, no matter that it might be dangerous for them both.

He would save Will, no matter what it might take.

The thought of being a conquering hero, of being Will's savoir, almost made him smile. He would bind Will even more closely to him by doing this; there was no way that Will's affections could waver after the man who was his lover had also saved his life.

He would do all the could to protect Will -- and himself as well. No one could take what belonged to him and not have to face his wrath. The monster who had dared to kidnap will would discover that, much to his chagrin. He would be summarily dealt with.

Will would be brought home safely; he would make sure of that. He might be more damaged than he already was, especially in the physical sense, but Hannibal would deal with that when the time came. Will might be even more broken, but he wouldn't be completely beyond repair.

Taking a deep breath, he stuffed the note into his pocket, heading upstairs to the room where he kept some of his more esoteric collections. He would find the gun he intended to use there.

And he would put it to good use dispatching the man who had dared to take what was his.

Hero Needed

Chapter Summary

If there has ever been a time in his life when Will needed a hero to rescue him, it's now.

Will huddled on the bed he'd been lying on for the past several hours, trying to hold back tears of frustration. He had no idea where he was, or who the man holding him prisoner could be. All of his attempts to find out anything about this person had come to failure.

When he'd come to, he'd found himself lying on this bed, naked, bound and gagged, not knowing where he was. At first, he'd thought it was a dream, but it had quickly become terrifyingly real.

Will squeezed his eyes closed, swallowing hard. The gag made it hard to swallow, even hard to breathe, but he couldn't let himself lose his voice. The moment it was removed from his mouth -- *if* it was; at this point he doubted that it would be -- he intended to scream.

But at the moment, the only sound he could make was a muffled whimper.

He hadn't even been able to scream when he was being violated; he'd had to suffer through it in relative silence as his attacker had whispered in his ear. Will had tried to push the things he'd said out of his mind, but some of them still stuck there.

He was going to die if someone didn't find him. He'd been told over and over again that these would be his last few hours, that death was inevitable. Each time the words had poured into his mind, his terror had escalated, until he was almost paralyzed with fear.

He didn't want to die. He didn't want this to be his ignominious end, trapped here with a rapist and a killer having his way with him. This wasn't how he wanted to go out.

But no one knew who his abductor was, or where he was being held. He didn't doubt that Hannibal had seen what had happened, but Hannibal had no way to find him. No one did. He was helpless to help himself, and no one else could help him either.

Will tugged ineffectually at the ropes that bound his wrists behind his back; it was just as useless to struggle now as it had been when he'd first awakened and found himself here. The bonds were cruelly tight, cutting into his flesh until his hands were numb.

He was sure that his wrists were wet with blood, even though he couldn't see them.

Would he bleed to death here, his life seeping into the sheets of the bed he was chained to and turning them red? No, that was ridiculous. He couldn't see any evidence that he was bleeding; there were no red stains on the white sheets beneath him.

If only he had his clothes, but his captor hadn't had the decency to let him retain his modesty. There was no need for it, really, but he'd feel better with some clothes on.

He jerked against the chain around one ankle, knowing that doing so was just as useless as struggling to free his hands. There was no way that his meager strength could break a chain; he was trapped here, unable to escape, at the mercy of his captor.

The man had left after the last time he'd taken Will, leaving him lying here with those last whispered words ringing in his ears. *"You are mine, Will. Mine. Lecter will find that out eventually, and he'll live with that knowledge for the rest of his miserable life."*

Where was Hannibal now? Was this monster taunting him with clues as to where Will was, knowing that even if Hannibal managed to find him it would be too late?

Will swallowed hard, closing his eyes, trying to push that thought out of his mind. No. He wasn't going to die here. If anyone was smart enough to figure out where he was and come to his rescue, it was Hannibal. If he had any clues at all, he would know where to go.

But that could mean that he'd be walking into a trap that could take his life.

He didn't want Hannibal to die trying to save him. He didn't want to die, either, but he couldn't even being to conceive of a world, a life, without Hannibal in it. If the other man died trying to protect him, and he somehow managed to survive, he would never forgive himself.

He wanted to think of Hannibal as being invincible, as being somehow invulnerable to death. But that wasn't so; Hannibal was only a man, albeit an extraordinary one. He could be killed; he wasn't the arbiter of life and death. He didn't have that kind of power.

Hannibal might find out where he was and come to rescue him, but he could be too late. He might find nothing here but Will's dead body, his killer long since vanished.

A shiver went through Will's body at the thought; he didn't want to contemplate his own death, even though he knew that death was closer to him now than it had ever been. He had no way out, no way to defend or protect himself, and no way of knowing if anyone would be able to save him.

He tried to ignore the aches of his body; thinking about how miserable he was and what had been done to him wouldn't do him any good. He had tried to close his mind and send his thoughts somewhere else while he was being violated; that was the only way to live through it.

if he hadn't been able to do that, then he would have been a screaming, pleading mess by the time it was over. The second time hadn't been any better, nor the third. After that, he'd lost count of how many times he'd been raped; he didn't want to think about it.

If he did, then he would lose all hope.

What was Hannibal going to think of him now, if he lived through this? Would he turn his back on Will, thinking that he was damaged goods? Would their relationship be over forever?

He didn't want to think that Hannibal would be like that, but he knew his lover well. There were some things that Hannibal wouldn't deal well with, and being presented with something that he considered substandard was one of them.

Hannibal only wanted the best. And even if he had thought that Will fell into that category at one time, that certainly wouldn't be the case any more. Their relationship probably wouldn't survive this, Will thought, a sob rising in his throat. It would be over before it had really started.

Why did that matter so much to him? If he made it through this situation, he should consider himself lucky to still be alive. It shouldn't matter that a relationship he hadn't asked for and hadn't expected to happen would more than likely fall by the wayside.

He had to concentrate on formulating some plan to get out of here; he couldn't simply lie here and wait to be violated again. He had to take the power of life and death into his own hands.

He couldn't let the man who had kidnapped and raped him have power over his life. Even if it was his destiny to die here, he had to die on his own terms; he couldn't let this monster have the satisfaction of the last of his dignity and pride away from him.

If he was going to die here, then he would go down fighting.

That thought should have given him hope, but it didn't. All he could see in his mind's eye was himself being violated again -- and then murdered like a wounded animal after it was over. He didn't want to die like that. He didn't want to leave this world as a helpless victim.

Will's head jerked up at the sound of a key in the lock of the door; his captor entered the room, closing the door behind him and turning to contemplate his captive. Will wanted to huddle into the wall, to make himself invisible. The way this man looked at him was frightening.

"Your boyfriend is coming to save you," the man said, smiling as he leaned against the door. "And I'll be waiting for him. He's going to watch you die, and that's going to break him. Completely. He's going to die knowing that he didn't save your life."

Will wanted to scream, to negate the words that he was hearing, to block them out. Instead, all he could do was swallow around the gag in his mouth; he didn't meet the man's gaze, refusing to let him see the fear that he knew would be obvious in his eyes.

The man stepped closer to the bed, reaching out to take Will's chin in his hand and jerk his face upward until their eyes met, their gazes locking.

Will struggled to free himself from that bruising grip on his chin, but he couldn't. All he could was stare into the eyes of a madman, a person who intended to destroy him, to destroy everything he held dear. He couldn't let that happen. He had to stop this. Somehow.

But there was no way to stop it. He was helpless to do anything.

This man held the power of life and death over both him and Hannibal. His lover would be walking into a trap; Will had no doubt of that. But at least he would see Hannibal one last time before he died -- and if there was any kind of justice, they would be together in some other life.

"I'm going to have one more time before he gets here," the man whispered, his lips curving into a smile. "Just so he'll be able to see that I fucked you. He'll know that you died feeling me inside you the last time you got fucked, and not him. That's going to kill him."

Will doubted that such knowledge would break Hannibal; he was sure that it would only make his lover angry. Angry enough to find a way to save them both? He could only hope so.

This man didn't know Hannibal at all. And therein lay his hope, Will told himself. If this man could misjudge Hannibal, if he didn't plan for all contingencies, then he might be able to get out this alive -- and Hannibal would, too. As well as Hannibal being the hero of the day.

Right now, he needed a hero. Badly.

Would Hannibal be that hero? Only time would tell, really. There was no way to know here and now if things would turn around, if the situation would change. He could do nothing to effect that change; Hannibal was now the only one who could save the day.

All he could do was hope. Hope that Hannibal would come here prepared to deal with this deranged monster who had kidnapped him, and hope that he would be able to get the upper hand. Then hope that if things worked out for the best, Hannibal wouldn't turn away from him.

He had no recourse but to endure whatever was still to come, and to keep that hope alive within himself. He had to let that hope carry him through; it was the only way that he would be able to survive and still keep his sanity. He had to hold on to that hope with everything he had.

Will closed his eyes as his captor's hands moved down his body, turning him over onto his stomach. He knew what was coming, and he only hoped that he would be able to endure it.

If there had ever been a time when a hero was needed, it was now.

The Shattering

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is Will's only hope of survival.

Will lay on his side, staring at the window, though the blinds and curtains were pulled tightly closed. No one would see the light from this room; no one would know he was here. No one would come to save him. Even Hannibal could never find him.

If Hannibal did come, he could very well die. That was the last thing Will wanted. A word without Hannibal in it didn't seem like a world worth living in.

But then, he wouldn't be living, would he? He already knew that his abductor planned to murder him. That had been made perfectly clear. If Hannibal didn't find him in time, they might both end up dead. And that wasn't something that he wanted to think about.

He didn't want to think about what had just been done to him, either. It wasn't the first time, but it had been the most painful -- aside from the first. The anger that had rained down on him had been unlike any he had ever seen; he'd feared for his life.

Will had kicked and struggled to avoid being stripped naked, but he should have known that it was useless to fight. He wasn't in a position to be defiant.

The anger in the man's eyes when he'd discovered the plug inside Will had been terrifying.

He'd pulled the plug out and thrown it across the room, then proceeded to slap Will as hard as he could. Will had curled into a ball, trying to hide his face from the blows, but that hadn't been possible. Even now, he could feel the bruise on one cheekbone, puffy and painful.

The words that had been thrown at him had been like punches. *"You little whore. You're nothing but a slut. You should have been saving yourself, and you let him do ....* this to you. You'll be punished for that. You should have known better."

There had been no lube, no preparation. Just a searing pain that had seemed to go through his entire body, each thrust like red-hot steel ripping him apart. Nothing that he and Hannibal had done together had prepared him for such pain, such violence.

He knew that it happened to men every day. But he'd never thought that this could happen to him. He'd never even considered it.

Rape had never been something that even entered his mind when it came to his personal space. He was always watchful at a crime scene, looking around carefully and carrying a gun, waiting for his space to be invaded by someone bent on violence.

But this was a kind of violence he'd never thought would be turned toward him. Why had he ever thought that no one would think of using rape as a way to overpower him? He'd seen it happen to other men; why had it never dawned on him that he could be so vulnerable?

He'd been a virgin the first time with Hannibal. He had thought Hannibal would be the only one.

What would Hannibal think about this when he found out? How would he feel? Would he think that Will had somehow betrayed him by letting another man be intimate with him?

No, he would never think like that, Will told himself, trying to make himself believe those words. Hannibal wouldn't blame him for what had been done to him. He would know that Will hadn't wanted this, that he had struggled against it.

No one in their right would *believe* that a person wanted to be raped. No one, that is, except a maniac like the man who had kidnapped and raped him. No one but a psycho who believed that Will had always been "waiting" for them to be together.

Of all the things he'd thought could possibly happen to him in the course of his field work with the FBI, this had been the last one. He hadn't even thought of it; being abducted, yes, being raped, no. He had never thought that he would be in this sort of situation.

He was waiting to shatter, to break into tiny pieces that would scatter over the ground. If that man touched him intimately again, it was bound to happen.

He was barely holding on to his sanity as it was. At the moment, if he could have opened his mouth to scream, he had a feeling that the sound would never stop. He would simply keep screaming, over and over again, and never be able to make himself stop.

The shattering had begun already. There were cracks in the facade.

He was tainted now. Used goods. Hannibal wouldn't want him again, not the way he would be when all of this was over -- *if* he survived it. Hannibal wouldn't want to be intimate with a man who'd been used in the way he had; Hannibal only wanted the best.

Will shifted his position slightly, trying to find a more comfortable way of lying down, but it was impossible His entire body ached; he felt as though he'd taken the worst beating of his life, not just once, but many times over. Everything hurt. It even hurt to *think*.

He had known that it was going to hurt. But he hadn't expected it to be like this. He hadn't expected to feel so completely violated, so .... *unclean*.

If he survived this, he didn't think that he could ever bear to let anyone touch him again -- not even Hannibal. He couldn't imagine that he would ever welcome the feel of anyone's hands on his body, much less the feeling of someone inside him.

Their relationship would effectively be over if they both lived through this. The thought made Will want to sob; he had so recently discovered the freedom and release that he'd always craved in Hannibal's arms, only to lose it so quickly.

He was never gong to be the same after this. He hadn't doubted that from the first moment he'd awakened and realized what a dire situation he was in. But he hadn't thought that he would feel so utterly demoralized -- or so completely hopeless.

Shifting again, Will tried to ignore the feeling of something wet trickling down his inner thighs. Was it blood? Or semen? He had no way of knowing.

All he knew was that any kind of movement hurt like hell.

He doubted that any bones were broken, but he was sure that he was bleeding after that last vicious attack. But did it really matter? If he was going to die, then he would be past caring about what had been done to his body. He would be past caring about anything.

No, he told himself fiercely, gingerly twisting his wrists against his bonds again, though he knew it was useless to try and loosen them. *I'm not going to die. Not here. Not like this.* He had to believe that. He couldn't give up hope.

Hannibal would find him. Hannibal would come to his rescue. If he didn't believe that, if he didn't hold on to the hope that somehow, Hannibal would put this situation to rights and take him out of here safely, then he would be lost. Without that hope, he might as well give up.

Hannibal wasn't some kind of superman. He knew that. But the other man seemed his best way -- his *only* way -- of getting out here alive. He knew that when Hannibal showed up, he wouldn't come here unprepared. He would have some kind of plan.

This man who had kidnapped him had greatly underestimated Hannibal. He didn't believe for a moment that anyone would be able to get the best of his lover.

Hannibal would be enraged at what had been done to him. He didn't know if the other man cared deeply for him, but he knew that there was at least *some* level of caring on Hannibal's part. He wouldn't let this go. He *would* be here.

He had to hold on to that though. It gave him hope. It gave him strength.

Without that hope, the shattering would begin, and he wouldn't be able to stop it. He couldn't let himself fall into that deep abyss of despair that his captor had tried to fashion for him. He might be teetering on the edge, but he wouldn't let himself fall into that darkness.

What was this man planning on doing to him? Will didn't want to think of all the ways he could die. A knife, a gun .... there were so many more, and all of them were unpleasant. He didn't want to consider death, not now. He had to think about living.

But that was hard to do when it felt like death was staring him in the face. Not only his own death, but very possibly Hannibal's, as well. Even though he had faith in his lover, there was always the possibility that he could be taken by surprise.

And if he was, then the game was up for both of them. He had to hope that Hannibal wouldn't let that happen, that he would somehow manage to prevail.

It was terrifying -- and frustrating -- to have to lie here helplessly, knowing that there was nothing he could do to stop whatever was going to happen. He was the pawn in all of this, and he was completely helpless to influence the outcome in any way.

At the moment, he was in too much pain to even sit up. All he could do was lie here, hoping and praying that Hannibal would find a way out for them both. He had to put all of his faith in Hannibal; he had nowhere else to turn, nothing else to cling to.

Hannibal was the only light in the darkness that was closing in on him.

Will closed his eyes, feeling a wave of hopelessness wash over him. So far, it appeared that his captor held all the cards -- there was no way that Hannibal could know what was waiting for him. Was he being used as bait to lure the other man into a trap that he couldn't escape from?

He couldn't let himself think like that. He *had* to believe that Hannibal would outwit this man, and that they would both get out of this safely.

Hannibal wasn't going to let him die. And he certainly wasn't going to turn over his own life to this psychotic rapist, Will told himself firmly. He had to hold on to the small shred of hope that Hannibal had a plan, that he would save them both.

The shattering had already begun, but Hannibal could stop it. Will only hoped that he would get here in time to do so, and that he wasn't holding onto a vain hope. He didn't want to believe that the next few hours would be his last, but it was starting to look that way.

Not Like This

Chapter Summary

This isn't the way that he and Will were meant to part.

Hannibal looked around him as he slowly entered the foyer of the house he'd been instructed to meet Will's abductor at, trying to be as quiet as he could. There was no sign of Will, but then, he *had* been told to go to the basement of the house.

His stomach muscles tightened at the thought of what he could find. Will might already be dead; he didn't want to let that thought unnerve him. He didn't want to think of the young man as a lifeless corpse; that wasn't how the wanted to remember Will.

Will wasn't going to die, he told himself firmly. He was going to rescue his lover and take him home safely, and the man who had dared to kidnap him would get his just desserts.

He couldn't lose Will. Not now, not like this. He wasn't going to examine his feelings on the matter too closely at the moment; he didn't have time. But he knew that if he lost Will, a life would go out of his life, a light that he didn't want to lose.

Slowly, carefully, the eased the revolver he was carrying out of his coat pocket. He wasn't absolutely sure that it was the best thing to do, holding a gun in plain sight when he confronted Will's assailant, but he was going to be as prepared as be possibly could be.

He couldn't hear anything; for just a moment, he let himself hope that Will wasn't here in this house, that he had somehow managed to escape. But he knew that wasn't likely.

No, Will was here. He was sure of it. And he needed help.

Taking a deep breath and then exhaling slowly, Hannibal made his way into the hallway; he was sure that the door to the basement would lead from there. After a few moments, he realized that he was correct -- the door was open, obviously left that was purposely.

He strode towards the door, realizing too late that his footsteps would probably be heard in the basement below. That man was holding Will captive down there; he had no doubt of that. And he'd just been foolish enough to advertise his presence in the house.

Well, in for a penny, in for a pound, he told himself as he began to cautiously move down the stairs into the basement. He didn't know what he would find there; he was trying his best to steel himself for whatever sight would meet his gaze.

When he reached the bottom of the steps, he looked around, frowning slightly. The basement was divided into rooms; there was light coming from one of them, so he could only assume

that was where his Will was being held captive. He would soon find out?

His Will? The thought came as a jolt. Of course, he thought of Will as his -- but this feeling had been less ownership and more .... protectiveness.

Hannibal shook his head, pushing that thought away. He would contemplate his feelings for Will later, after this was over and his young lover was safe. He couldn't afford to let himself be distracted now; Will's life could be at stake.

He heard a movement from the room with the lights; Will had to be in there.

He wasn't going to rush forward; that would probably only get Will killed. He didn't doubt that the psychotic who had abducted Will was in that room with him, holding him prisoner, just waiting for Hannibal to come rushing to the rescue.

That would give him the excuse he needed to harm Will; Hannibal wasn't going to give him that excuse. He was going to make sure this man's plans were thwarted, and that he suffered for what he had done. He would make sure of that, if it was the last thing he did.

Of course, it wouldn't be the last thing he did. He would prevail in this; he would rescue Will, and the man who had dared to take what was his would come to regret his actions.

When he stepped into the room, the tableau that met his eyes was something of what he had expected, though not quite. Will was standing in the center of the room, naked, his hands tied behind his back, what looked like a tourniquet around his throat.

The man who had abducted him was standing behind him, holding a gun to Will's head. A smile curved his lips, a smile that indicated his pleasure at the situation. He obviously thought that he had won, that he held all of the cards in this little game.

No, not a game, Hannibal cautioned himself. This wasn't a game, not when Will's life hung in the balance. He couldn't treat this as a game, couldn't afford to make any wrong moves. He had to Find a way to get that man away from Will.

"So we meet at last," he said, keeping his voice measured and even. "What do I have to do for you to let Will go, and for the two of us to leave here?"

The man's eyes widened as though he hadn't expected Hannibal to speak first; when he spoke, the tone of his voice belied his satisfaction. "You aren't leaving here, Dr. Lecter. Neither is Will. You're both going to die here. You'll watch him die first."

Hannibal's muscles tensed at the words. This situation was more dangerous than he'd thought.

"You're going to watch your boyfriend choke to death," the man continued, sounding almost gleeful. "And then you're going to try to kill me. I never doubted that. But I'm too fast for you, Lecter. And you're not going to be able to function once your little plaything is dead."

Hannibal's lips tightened; he couldn't stop himself. Yes, he would be upset if Will was killed, and he would do anything within his power to prevent that from happening. But if this man thought that a death would destroy him, even Will's death, then he was indeed crazy.

"I have no intention of doing anything of the sort," he said, trying to keep his voice level. "I am going to take Will out of here and get him the care he needs. And you are going to jail. Or to hell. Whichever one suits you better. I would prefer the latter."

The man threw back his head and laughed, the sound echoing around the small room. "I don't think so, Dr. Lecter. I really don't think so. But you can go on believing that if you like. You can believe it right up until the second that your boyfriend gasps his last."

With those words, he began to twist the cords around Will's throat with one hand, pulling them tighter. Hannibal could see that he had twisted the cords around what looked like two knitting needles; it was easy to pull them tight by twisting the needles.

His heart was slamming against his rib cage; he knew that it would be all too easy for this man to choke Will before he could do anything.

He wanted to shoot, but he didn't dare .Will's slender body formed a delicate barrier between the bullet and the man that it was meant for; if he was even so much as one millimeter off in his aim, he could kill Will himself, purely by accident.

He couldn't let that happen .He couldn't take the chance.

But he had to do something, and quickly. Will was already gasping for breath; he couldn't claw at the cords around his throat, not with his hands tied. Hannibal knew that he was running out of time, just as Will was running out of oxygen.

The man laughed at him again, twisting the cords tighter. Will made a strangled sound; his eyes rolled back in his head, and his body spasmed. Hannibal didn't want to watch, didn't want more proof that Will was being murdered before his eyes.

"You can't save him, Dr. Lecter," Will's abductor whispered to him, even as he tightened the cords yet again. "He's going to die, and you're going to watch it happen. You're going to see his dead body in front of you before *you* die. You'll join him in hell."

"That would never be the place that Will went, if you believe in such things," Hannibal told him, unable to keep the anger out of his voice. "He's never done anything but good."

"And you, Dr. Lecter?" the man inquired, tilting his head to the side as though they were having a civilized conversation, as though he wasn't choking a man to death at gunpoint even as he spoke. "Where would *you* go? I doubt it would be the same place."

What did this man know about him? Hannibal thought, panic starting to rise. He obviously knew something, or he wouldn't have said those words. Not only did he have to save Will, he had to find a way to make sure that this man was the one who was left dead.

Will gasped again; Hannibal could see that his lips were slowly turning blue. He had to do something, and quickly, before it was too late to save his lover from this hideous fate. He had to find an opening, any chance that he might have to turn this situation around.

Will's assailant moved his hand slightly, the gun pointing away from his captive.

That was the chance he'd been waiting for. Without hesitation, Hannibal aimed and fired; his heart felt as though it had jumped into his throat for a second, until he saw the dark hole appear in the man's forehead and the gun dropped from his hand.

There was a surprised look on his face as he fell to the ground, as though he hadn't allowed himself to even conceive that this could happen to him.

Will crumpled to the ground before Hannibal could catch him; without another thought for the man who had held Will captive, Hannibal rushed to his young lover's side, taking Will into his arms and turning him over, searching his face anxiously.

Will didn't appear to be breathing. Hannibal's heart caught in his throat; he couldn't be too late. After what had just happened, Will should be breathing and opening his eyes, looking up at him and giving him a wan, grateful smile. He shouldn't be like this.

His lips were slightly blue; Hannibal could feel no breath of life coming from his lungs. This wasn't right. This wasn't the way it should be. This wasn't supposed to happen. He wasn't supposed to lose Will like this. He should have years left with the mate of his choice.

This was not their ending. It couldn't be. He wouldn't accept that Will had been taken from him. Not like this. It wasn't time for them to say their final goodbyes. Not yet.

Hannibal gently unwound the cords around Will's throat, throwing them aside. He tiled the young man's head back, opening his mouth, then leaning forward to place his lips on Will's to breathe air and life and hope into his inert body.

This had to work. He wouldn't accept that Will was gone.

He would *feel* it if his lover was gone. There would be an empty space within him, a space that he knew in his heart no one else could ever fill. Until this moment, he hadn't thought that he loved Will. Now, he wasn't so sure of that.

His efforts didn't seem to be working; Will wasn't moving, wasn't breathing. Fear seized Hannibal's heart in a spasm; what if he *had* been too late? If that was the case, he would never forgive himself for robbing both of them of their time together.

He couldn't lose Will, not like this. He couldn't let his lover depart from this life without seeing that smile once more, without seeing love and desire in those blue eyes.

Hannibal gathered Will close, holding the young man's inert body in his arms, whispering into his ear. "Will, don't leave me," he pleaded, the words coming from the depths of his soul. Come back to me. It is not our time to part. Not yet. Please don't go."

He laid Will down again, then bent over him to press his lips against his lover's slack mouth. He wasn't going to give up until he knew that it was hopeless. Somewhere within this body, a spark of life still burned -- just as strongly as hope burned in Hannibal's heart.

This Is Not the End

Chapter Summary

Hannibal refuses to accept that their story will end like this.

This was not the end. It couldn't be. He and Will still had years left, years to know each other, to be together. Hannibal wasn't going to let their story end here, on a cold floor in an abandoned house, without having a proper chance to say goodbye to Will.

He closed his eyes, holding back the tears that threatened to spill over. How long had it been since he had cried? He didn't remember.

His hands worked at Will's chest as he continued to breathe life into the young man's body; Will *had* to respond to this. He had to cough, to breathe, anything to let Hannibal know that he was still here, that he hadn't left this world.

How long would this take? How long would it be before he either knew that it was hopeless, or Will opened those beautiful blue eyes and gazed up at him? How long before he knew whether his life had ended, or that it could go on as before?

No, not as before. This night would change his life forever.

If he lost Will, then his life would never be the same. And even if he didn't, then he would be irrevocably shaken by the knowledge that he had almost lost what was most precious to him in the world, lost what meant more than anything else ever had.

This couldn't be how it ended. Not for them. They deserved more than this, more than to be cut off abruptly when they had only just found each other.

Will deserved more than this. He deserved to live a long and happy life, a life that gave him more than what he had already gotten, a life that was fulfilling and worthy of him. He was so young. He couldn't simply have his life snuffed out like a wavering candle flame.

He almost gasped when he felt Will's lips move under his.

Hannibal released one last breath into Will's lungs, hoping that this would be the one to bring him back. In just a few seconds, the young man coughed, choked slightly, then took a deep breath, drawing air into his own lungs, breathing on his own.

Hannibal closed his eyes in relief, sitting back on his heels, resisting the urge to press one hand against his heart. Everything would be all right now. Will was safe, Will was alive. He had somehow managed to bring Will back -- if he'd actually been gone at all.

He didn't realize that there were tears running down his cheeks; when he raised a hand to his face to push back his damp hair, he felt the wetness there and marveled at it. He hadn't cried in years. He had thought that he'd forgotten how to cry.

Will wasn't dead. Will was with him. Will wasn't leaving him. The thought made him want to cry out Will's name, to enfold the young man in his arms and hold him close.

But Hannibal stopped himself from doing so; after what Will had obviously been through, an embrace from a male, even someone he trusted, wasn't what he needed right now. What he needed was medical care; he had to be taken to a hospital quickly.

"Hannibal." Will's voice was cracked, a mere whisper of sound. "You found me."

"Of course I did," Hannibal whispered back, taking Will's hand in his own and squeezing it gently before helping Will to sit up. He looked away from the dried blood on Will's thighs, the bruises and scratches on his pale skin. He couldn't afford to be angry now.

He didn't bother to glance at the body of the man who had abducted and raped Will; in Hannibal's eyes, he was nothing more than trash. He wouldn't even deign to turn this one into a meal; this meat was already rancid, rotten from the inside out.

He had to concentrate on keeping Will warm, on calling an ambulance, on getting his lover to the hospital. He had to be certain that Will would be all right.

All right. He almost wanted to snort at the thought. It would be quite a long time before Will was "all right" again, after what had been done to him. Hannibal didn't doubt that this had set their sexual relationship back quite a bit, but that was the least of his concerns now.

"C-cold," Will stammered, his teeth chattering. "So cold."

Hannibal nodded, looking around the room for something to cover Will with. He rose to his feet, going to the bed in the corner and pulling the blanket away, trying to ignore the blood on the sheets. He had no doubt that it was Will's blood.

Anger rose within him again. How *dare* that bastard have dared to lay a finger on Will? Will was his; Will belonged to him, and to no one else.

Well, the man was dead now, and all for the good. Hannibal knew that he wouldn't be arrested for murder; the man had obviously harmed Will, and he had only been acting in Will's best interests -- and his own self-defense -- when he had fired that deadly shot.

He didn't regret it, not in the slightest. In fact, he would do it over again, if he could -- only he would make sure that the bastard suffered more than he'd been made to. That was his only regret, that he hadn't been able to inflict the pain and suffering that was deserved.

Though at the moment, that really didn't seem to matter. All that mattered was that he get Will out of here; he had to make sure that his young lover was taken to safety, and that he would be given the best possible treatment for his wounds.

In fact, he intended to look after Will himself, if he was allowed to.

Leaning down, he helped Will to his feet, wrapping the blanket around hsi nude body and guiding him to a chair near the bed. He didn't want to look at the trappings of Will's captivity -- the shackles on the bed, the gag that had obviously been in his mouth.

That was behind them now. Will was here, and he was safe. No one was going to touch him, no one was going to harm him.

"You were cring over me," Will whispered, looking up at him. "You really do care about me, don't you?" His voice was very soft, a little shaky. "I kept hoping you would find me. All I could think about was you. I kept thinking that you wouldn't want me any more, that I'm tainted now."

Hannibal shook his head, a frown creasing his brow. "Never think that, Will," he said, his voice gentle. "I could never stop wanting you. What was done to you wasn't your fault -- I could hardly blame you for what someone else did."

He didn't want to admit to his young lover that he had indeed been crying. Somehow, it seemed far too weak of him to have been so concerned about Will that it had brought tears to his eyes. But Will deserved to know the truth, deserved to know that he did indeed care.

"Of course I was crying when I thought that you were going to die," he said softly. "I could not bear to lose you, Will. You mean far too much to me."

With those words, he leaned forward to place a gentle kiss against Will's lips.

Will was crying himself now, sobs tearing at his throat. "I should have been more careful," he sobbed, closing his eyes and shaking his head. "It *was* my fault. He shouldn't have been able to get to me. I caused you all that worry. I'm so sorry, Hannibal."

Hannibal knelt beside the chair, taking Will's face between his hands. "Don't you dare blame yourself for this, Will," he said, his voice soft, but the words strong and firm. "This was *not* your fault. You are not to blame for any of what happened."

Will nodded, then gulped. "I wish you hadn't had to go through this," he said, his voice still cracked and a little unsteady. "I'd give anything for you to have been spared all that worry. But I've got to admit that I'm glad you did worry about me."

"You've been through much more than I have," Hannibal pointed out to him. "And of course I worried about you. You're a vital part of my life, Will. You mean a great deal to me."

He wasn't going to say more than that. Any more, and he might get choked up. He needed to be alone for a while, to weigh his feelings, to assess these new revelations of all that Will meant to him. That wasn't going to be an easy task.

What mattered now was getting Will safely out of here, and to a hospital.

He could mull over his own emotions later. For the moment, Will was the main priority. Pulling out his cell phone, Hannibal quickly dialed Jack Crawford, letting him know what

had happened. Then he dialed 911, giving them the address and telling them to send an ambulance.

When he turned back to Will, the young man had pulled his legs up against his chest, wrapping his arms around them and resting his forehead on his knees. Hannibal went to sand beside the chair, his hand on Will's shoulder, offering what comfort he could.

This had not been the end, he told himself. Only the beginning. They would move forward from here -- and if he played his cards right, then Will would be more his than ever. Their relationship had moved to an entirely new level, one that Hannibal was eager to explore.

Not Just A Friend

Chapter Summary

When Will awakens in the hospital, he has dim memories of Hannibal snatching him away from the jaws of death.

Will turned his head to the side, his gaze resting on the man in the chair next to his hospital bed. He hadn't expected Hannibal to be here when he'd awakened; he'd drifted off to sleep comforted by the other man's presence, but he hadn't thought Hannibal would stay.

Apparently, he'd spent the night here in the hospital, watching over him. That was more than anyone could expect; no one else had even wanted to be around while he was still awake, much less when he'd been sleeping and oblivious to the world.

His mouth twisted slightly at the thought. For all of their protestations of friendship and caring about him, the people he worked with had been all too quick to leave.

He knew who really cared about him. It was obvious from the stubble on Hannibal's jaw that he'd been here all night; he hadn't bothered to go home to change clothes, shave, or make himself look more presentable. That was all the proof Will needed of his concern.

If Hannibal was here, it meant that he really cared.

He had to hold on to that, had to believe that he had at least one friend in the world. No, not just a friend, Will corrected himself. A lover. Hannibal was much more than just a friend. He was proving that simply by being here, by caring.

Will surreptitiously watched his lover dozing in the chair; Hannibal looked exhausted, as though he hadn't slept in days. Maybe he hadn't, Will thought, feeling guilty for being a little cheered by the idea. If Hannibal had been that worried about him ....

It didn't seem possible that anyone could care for him enough to put their own safety on the line to rescue him from the situation he'd been in. But Hannibal had done just that.

Hannibal had risked his own life to save him. And even though he wasn't completely sure that it had happened and he wasn't simply dreaming it, he thought that Hannibal had brought him back from that hazy shadow world that had been leading to death.

He had felt death coming for him, felt its icy breath on the back of his neck. He'd even thought he saw it reaching a bony hand out to him, beckoning him forward, letting him know that if he hesitated to take that hand, it would descend on him and claim him for its own.

But Hannibal had kept that from happening.

Was he imagining things, or had he felt Hannibal's lips on his, breathing life back into his body when death had been insisting that he no longer had a place in this world? Did he owe Hannibal his life, many times over? Something told him that hadn't been his imagination.

If that was true, then Hannibal was far more to him now than just his lover or his friend. He was the man who had selflessly saved his life.

How could he repay someone for that? He had never thought he would be in that position, but yet, here he was, in a hospital bed, safe and protected -- and all because Hannibal had rescued him and brought him out of the nightmare he'd been thrust into.

Will lay back against the softness of the pillows, wincing as he shifted position and hit a bruise. It was going to be a while before he was fully recovered from all that had happened; not only nearly losing his life, but .... everything else.

He didn't want to think about what had been done to him. He wanted to push all of that away and slam a door on it, lock it firmly into the back of his mind and pretend that it didn't exist, that it hadn't happened. But he knew that he couldn't ignore the facts.

He was a survivor. He always had been. He would get past this.

But at the moment, it was hard for him to believe that he would be able to put this behind him and move on easily. What if this had set back his relationship with Hannibal? Will was sure that it would; just the thought of being touched made panic rise in his throat.

How long would Hannibal put up with something like that? He wasn't the kind of man who would wait for long. He didn't have infinite patience.

Will swallowed hard, closing his eyes. If this had wrecked his relationship with Hannibal, then he would dig up the dead body of his rapist and spit on his bones. There was nothing he could do to exact payback now, but he would curse that bastard until his dying day.

He didn't want to believe that this had ruined the relationship he shared with Hannibal. Of course it was going to be a while before he felt comfortable with being intimate again. But Hannibal wasn't going to walk out on him just because he had been damaged.

At least, he hoped not. He didn't want to think that Hannibal's regard for him was so ephemeral that his lover would turn his back now, when Will most needed him. He wanted to believe that their relationship, new as it might be, was stronger than that.

If it wasn't, then the whole thing had been a mistake.

He supposed they would find out where they stood once he felt well enough to go home -- he doubted that Hannibal would wait very long to test the waters. He just hoped that he would be strong enough to let himself be immersed in them.

What if he wasn't? Fear caught in Will's throat, freezing a small sound there that sounded suspiciously like a sob. What if he was tainted goods now, damaged beyond repair?

What if his relationship with Hannibal never recovered from this? What if they were never lovers again? What if the trust that they were building between themselves was lost for good, all of it gone in one sweeping motion, and they could never get it back?

As though his thoughts had awakened the man sitting in the chair by his bed, Hannibal's lashes fluttered, then his eyes opened. He shook his head slightly as though to clear it, then looked directly at Will, leaning forward to take the younger man's hand in his own.

"I thought you would never wake up," Hannibal said softly, squeezing Will's hand, his touch gentler than Will would have ever dreamed it could be. "How do you feel?"

How did he feel? That was an easy one.

"Like I was kidnapped, tortured and raped by a psychopath, and like I nearly died and somebody who cares about me brought me back to life," Will said, the words making his throat ache. It hurt to speak so much; his voice was rough and gravelly, as though he'd swallowed rocks.

It almost seemed as though Hannibal wanted to laugh at his words; the corners of his mouth twitched up slightly, then he shook his head.

"Don't try to talk too much," he said, reaching out to smooth Will's tangled dark curls back from his damp forehead. "You shouldn't exert yourself too much, Will. You need to spend a few days here to recover. You *did* have a near-death experience."

"So I didn't just dream that," Will murmured, his gaze riveted on Hannibal's face. "You really *did* bring me back to life, didn't you?" He swallowed hard, the words he wanted to say all seeming to jumble up in his throat, vying for the right to be said.

"Thank you," was all he finally managed to get out. "I owe you my life, Hannibal. I can never repay you for that. Never. But I'm going to try."

Hannibal smiled, shaking his head and squeezing Will's hand again. "No thanks are needed, Will. A world without you in it would be a much less interesting place for me -- and it would be a world that I doubt I would particularly like. I couldn't bear to lose you."

Will's breath caught in his throat. Had Hannibal just said what he thought he'd heard?

Was that proof that Hannibal truly *did* care about him, that their relationship was about more than just the slaking of their physical desires?

He hoped that was the case. He hoped that he hadn't heard wrong, that the words Hannibal had just said were words that he meant. But he wasn't going to ask if they were true, not now. He was just going to hold those words close and let them comfort him.

He was a survivor; he'd gone through a lot in his life. But here, lying in this bed and feeling as though he'd been run over by a steamroller, he was weak and vulnerable. And those words got to him in a way that nothing else possibly could.

Will closed his eyes to hold back the rush of tears that rose behind them. He wasn't going to cry. Not here, not now, not in front of Hannibal. This wasn't the time or the place. He could cry and let his emotions out when he was alone, when they wouldn't be witnessed.

And he could thank Hannibal in a much more effusive way when he had recovered.

That was what he really needed to do, Will told himself. He needed to get past what had happened, to prove to Hannibal that this wasn't going to destroy their relationship, that he could still be all that Hannibal needed. But his lover would have to help him do that.

He hoped that Hannibal understood what they were facing. He couldn't do it alone. He needed help, and that help would have to come from the man who was sitting here holding his hand, the man who he had given himself to, the man who he trusted more than anyone.

The man who had saved his life. The man who he owed all to, even though it felt a little uncomfortable to know that he was so obligated.

"Sleep, Will," Hannibal told him, his voice soft. "You need to give yourself time to heal. Everything will seem less complicated when you awaken again. We can talk about all that's happened later. For now, rest and get your strength back."

Will closed his eyes and did as he was told, relieved to let slumber take him over.

Drag Me Down

Chapter Summary

Will struggles to keep a sense of defeat from taking him over.

"Excuse me for a few moments, Will," Hannibal said, getting up and heading for the door of Will's hospital room. "I want to talk to your doctors, and to Jack. I'll be back before too long. Just try to relax and get some sleep if you can."

Will nodded, watching Hannibal leave, feeling as though a great deal of the light had gone out of the room as his lover closed the door behind him.

He sank back against the pillows, feeling deflated. It was great to know that Hannibal had stayed here in the hospital with him, but that still didn't stop a feeling of defeat from washing over him, making him feel small and helpless, a victim of the whims of fate.

It wasn't a feeling he particularly enjoyed.

He had always told himself that he would never be a victim, never let any situation get the better of him. He saw far too many of those victims every day; he tried to find justice for all of them, and all too often, he felt that he failed in that task.

It was why he worked so hard for Jack and the FBI, why he turned himself towards looking through the eyes of killers rather than sticking to the teaching that he enjoyed. He wanted to help people, to find justice for those who might otherwise be overlooked.

He had never thought that he might be one of those victims himself, but he'd come close to it. If it hadn't been for Hannibal, he would have died there in that room, in the clutches of a man who had already defiled and violated him.

He had become the victim he'd sworn that he would never be -- and Hannibal had seen him as being that victim. That was the last thing he had ever wanted; he didn't want Hannibal to see him as a victim, or as somehow being his responsibility.

Will wanted them to be partners, but now their balance was gone.

Would Hannibal ever be able to look at him in the same way again? Will closed his eyes, holding back a groan. He had no idea how Hannibal would look at him now; the sense of defeat swept over him again, almost making him want to cry.

He couldn't let that defeat take him over and drag him down. That would only make Hannibal back away from him. He had to be strong and get past this.

And he would, Will told himself, taking a deep breath. Somehow, he would recover and put this behind him. He had to. His future relationship with Hannibal depended that, and he wasn't going to let defeat drag him under without putting up one hell of a fight.

Put Up A Fight

Chapter Summary

Hannibal insists that Will be allowed to convalesce at his home.

Hannibal stalked down the hallway outside of Will's room, ready to do battle with Jack Crawford and anyone else who thought that Will needed to stay here. This atmosphere wasn't good for him; it was making him feel like a victim, not like a survivor.

He hated the way that everyone was crowding around Will with platitudes and sorrowful faces -- when they had done nothing to help when Will needed it.

The last thing that Will needed at the moment was to be made to feel that he'd been a victim, and that all the people around him felt sorry for him. He needed to draw on strength, not weakness. He didn't need to be made to feel that he was a figure of pity.

Hannibal was ready to tear into the next person who dared to do so. He was here to protect Will, and the best way to do that, in his eyes, was to make sure that he could take Will to his home as soon as possible, to let him stay there while he convalesced.

If anyone tried to stop him, he would simply go over them.

He was Will's psychiatrist, as well as his lover. He knew Will better than anyone, and he knew what was best for his lover. He had no intention of letting Will stay here and have it beaten into his head that he should be pitied and treated with kid gloves.

Of course, he had no intention of bullying Will in any way -- or in rushing his convalescence so they could resume their sexual relationship. He didn't intend to push Will in any way, not until he felt that the young man was ready. He didn't want a broken toy.

That thought made him pause, his steps slowing. A toy? He didn't think of Will in that way. Not any more. Maybe he had at first, but now, everything had changed.

Having Will almost ripped away from him had made him realize just how much he cared about the young man. Yes, in some ways Will was still an experiment for him, but he could no longer deny that there was more to their relationship than he'd originally planned for there to be.

Will was his. *His.* His to protect, his to .... to care about. And no one was going to take that right away from him. Will belonged at his house, convalescing from his terrible experience, rather than here in this cold, sterile place.

He *would* take Will home. As soon as he could.

Rounding the corner at the end of the hallway, he saw Jack standing near a nurse's station, talking to Will's doctor. Hannibal approached the two of them, his mouth a thin line; he wasn't going to hide his annoyance. There was no need for him to do so.

"When will you let me take Will home from the hospital?" He didn't mince words; he was in no mood to be polite, to circle around the main issue. "He needs to be in a place that's calm and stable, and conducive to his recovery. This isn't it."

Jack's eyes narrowed; he looked belligerent, as though he would step in front of Hannibal and stop him in his tracks. "Will needs to be kept under observation."

"Why?" Hannibal's brows rose; he had expected Jack to make that objection. "I am a doctor; I can observe him just as well in a quieter environment at home as anyone can do the same here. This atmosphere isn't good for him. It's making him feel depressed."

"Did he tell you that?" Now it was Jack's turn to raise his brows; it was obvious that he didn't believe what Hannibal was saying. "I don't think you have the right to make decisions for him. If Will wants to go home, then we'll take him home. To *his* home."

Hannibal could feel anger rising within him; with difficulty, he pushed it down.

"You would take him all the way to Wolf Trap and leave him there, on his own, to fend for himself?" he asked, his brows still raised, his voice icy cold. "That's not a very good way of caring for someone who you claim is your friend, Jack."

"He would have someone there with him around the clock," Jack snapped, shaking his head. "I wouldn't just leave him there by himself."

"But you would have one of your people there to tell you that he could come back to work the second you got a new case, and decided to work him relentlessly again," Hannibal told him, the anger in his tone a knife edge. "I won't allow that. Will needs to rest and recover."

Jack looked abashed, then raised his hands, shaking his head. "All right, all right. I agree, Doctor Lecter. You're a doctor; you know better than I do what Will needs. But I think the doctors here are just as qualified as you are, so you might want to listen to them."

"No." Hannibal shook his head decisively, his hand slicing through the air. "I didn't want to bring this up, but I am not only Will's doctor -- I am also his lover. I want to keep him with me and take care of him. I believe that I have the right to do that, as I am involved with him."

Jack's incredulous stare almost made him feel as though he'd made a terrible mistake in telling about his relationship with Will, but it was too late to back down now.

"You and Will are involved?" Jack said, frowning. "That changes things."

"It changes nothing," Hannibal said sharply. "As you know, I am not officially Will's psychiatrist. I've talked to him about some problems he's faced, but nothing more than that. There is no professional impropriety here. He became involved with me of his own free will."

He knew that he was on safe ground. Technically, Will wasn't his patient, so he hadn't violated any kind of professional ethics. And even though they were work colleagues, he wasn't really a part of the FBI team; he was only consulted now and then.

No one could fault him for wanting the best for the man he was involved with. And in Hannibal's eyes, resting at home *was* best for Will.

He turned to the doctor, raising his brows and speaking in a haughty voice. "As I am a doctor myself, what do you think of the idea of Will staying in my home to convalesce, rather than being here, in an atmosphere that makes him feel weak and victimized?"

The doctor couldn't meet his eyes; he looked down at Will's chart, nodding as he did so. "I think that may very well be a good idea. He would recover more quickly in a place where he feels comfortable -- and with someone he knows and trusts taking care of him."

Hannibal allowed himself an inward smile. He had won.

He turned to Jack, feeling somewhat magnanimous now that he had gotten what he wanted. "Of course, my door is open to you, if you feel that you should need to talk to Will. But I warn you -- I won't allow you to make him work. He needs time to recover."

Jack nodded, looking as though he agreed, but Hannibal could tell that his lips had tightened and that he was holding back what was more than likely an angry reply. "Of course. I'll defer to you as to Will's health, Doctor Lecter. But he can't be away indefinitely."

"Of course not." Hannibal managed a tight smile, wishing that he could punch Jack into the wall. "But he also can't be pushed into going back to work."

For a moment, he thought that there might be a standoff with Jack, right here in the hallway of the hospital. But after a few seconds, the other man nodded curtly and turned on his heel, making his way down the hall in the opposite direction from Will's room.

He was a little surprised that Jack had backed down as quickly as he had, but he hadn't expected the other man to put up much of a fight, really. He knew that Jack only viewed Will as an automaton, a machine to be used and thrown away when it no longer functioned quite as well.

Will meant nothing to Jack. Will meant everything to him.

He felt more protective of Will than he ever would have thought possible. This was something that he would have to think about; it was something of a shock to him that Will had grown to be so important to him, not just as a distraction, but as .... a person.

Will was taking over his mind, becoming more a part of him than Hannibal had ever dreamed he could be. At the moment, that didn't seem like such a bad thing.

Having Will in his house, being with him on a daily basis, would bring them closer than anything yet had. He was looking forward to that time, though he knew that he would have to move slowly with Will, and aid in his recovery as much as he could.

Turning, he made his way back down the hall to Will's room, to tell his lover the good news. He had some things to set in motion before he could take Will home, but after that, the way would be clear for them to be together for some time as Will recovered.

The One Responsible

Chapter Summary

Will's recovery will take a while, but he knows that he's in the best possible place for it. Or is he?

Will sank back against the comfortable pillows on the bed with a thankful sigh. It had been hard for him to get up the stairs, even though Hannibal had taken things very slowly, supporting most of his weight. But he'd still had to move, which his body hadn't wanted to do.

He knew that all the bruises would fade before too long, but at the moment, every single one of them seemed to have sprung to life and were throbbing painfully.

Still, he was alive, he told himself. Alive and safe, here in Hannibal's home. He didn't know how Hannibal had managed to convince his doctors that he should leave the hospital, but he had -- and he'd been brought here, instead of taken to his own home.

It was a relief to be able to let himself lie back and drift.

Hannibal had assured him that Beverly and Jimmy were taking care of his dogs; they would be fed and let out to run, and even though they'd be missing Will's companionship, they would be safe. Hannibal would even take him to visit them on the weekend.

But Hannibal had insisted that he was going to spend the majority of his recovery time here, where he could be supervised. Will was grateful for that; as much as he usually liked his solitude, this wasn't a time when he really wanted to be alone.

Hannibal was right; this *was* the best place for him to recover. If he stayed alone in his own home, he would have his dogs for company, but no one to really talk to. And at this point, he felt that he needed to talk to Hannibal.

He needed to put their relationship back on the right keel. He didn't want Hannibal to feel responsible for him; he didn't want the other man to think that he had somehow been responsible for what had happened, since Will had been kidnapped when he was there.

The only person responsible for all of this was dead.

It was still hard for him to believe that Hannibal had shot the man, especially when he could have killed Will; that was just one more shock that he was going to have to recover from. He and Hannibal would have to have a long, serious talk about that.

But at the moment, the only important thing was that he was here, in Hannibal's home, and that Hannibal actually *wanted* him to be here.

Will sighed, closing his eyes, waiting for Hannibal to come back into the room. He knew that his recovery was going to take a while, but somehow, that didn't seem daunting -- not now when he was in the best possible place for that recovery to be complete.

Start of the Breakdown

Chapter Summary

Hannibal is not happy that someone else has begun to break Will.

This wasn't the way he'd planned for things to work out, Hannibal thought with a frown. He wasn't happy with this at all. He had planned to be the one who broke Will down, one little piece at a time. He hadn't thought that someone else would take that away from him.

Will was more broken than he'd ever seen him; he didn't like that fact. There was no satisfaction in it for him; he couldn't congratulate himself on a job well done.

And as well, there was that disturbing feeling he'd had when Will had been a captive in that man's clutches, that feeling that Will was more important to him than he should be. Try as he might, he couldn't shake that feeling, couldn't push it away.

It was disturbing to feel that control was slipping away from him.

He hadn't been in control when that man had taken Will prisoner. He'd had to dance to someone else's tune, and he hadn't liked that at all. It had been the last thing he wanted to do, but he had been forced into it by circumstances outside of his control.

That was when he felt at the greatest disadvantage, when he coudln't control all that went on around him. It was a feeling that enraged him; how *dare* the world, or anyone in it, deny control to Hannibal Lecter? He had a to that control.

It still felt as though control was slipping away from him, which was one reason he had insisted that Will stay here during his convalescence. Of course, it had been the right decision; Will needed to be with someone who could take care of him.

If he was alone in his house all the way out in Wolf Trap, he would be alone if anything else happened and he needed help. Hannibal couldn't allow that.

Did he only think that way because Will had somehow become precious to him, more so than he had ever thought anyone could be? That idea made him frown; he had never let anyone get that close to him before, and he hadn't intended on doing so now.

But Will was a part of him, whether he wanted to admit it or not.

That seemed to be an irrefutable fact. He couldn't deny that he was responsible for Will, in ways that he hadn't thought he would be when their relationship had started. It wasn't that he couldn't take on that kind of responsibility, but more that he hadn't expected to.

Still, this might be an excellent way to break Will down further, to bring the boy even more under his power. He was already more than halfway there; this incident would have weakened his will quite a bit, and it would be child's play to manipulate him.

Hannibal wasn't entirely sure of just *how* he would break Will, only that he would. The fact that the young man was dependent on him at the moment was a stroke of good luck; it would be much easier to keep Will under his thumb here in his own home.

Much harder to do if he'd been separated from Will by the miles between Baltimore and Wolf Trap. But he wouldn't have allowed that to happen.

No, he was going to maintain control.

But could that control slip when Will was so closely under his supervision?

That thought gave him pause, made him wonder. He had to question his own responses to having Will so close; could he hold back the impulses that drew him to Will? Was it dangerous for him to have Will here, so closely under his care?

He was starting to care more for Will than he'd ever believed possible. If Will stayed here for any length of time, those feelings had the chance to grow and develop. If they did, then he might not be able to maintain the control that he so prized.

If he didn't have that control, then he wouldn't be able to bring himself to break Will further than he was broken already. That didn't bode well for the future.

His control required a bit of distance, and now, he'd made sure that he wouldn't have that. If he didn't keep at least a bit of distance between himself and Will, then he would give in to those more tender feelings he was already starting to harbor for the young man.

Breaking Will would be easy. But he could also break a part of himself in the process, and that wasn't what he had intended to do.

It would be far too easy to give in to those softer feelings.

He'd already done that once, hadn't he? When he had knelt on the cold floor of that basement room with Will in his arms, begging his young lover not to die, his soul had reached out to Will. Those softer feelings had been in evidence, front and center.

He had never intended that, never thought it could happen. He had known that a fierce desire raged within him where Will was concerned, but until that moment, he hadn't really understood that the desire carried with it feelings that he couldn't put a name to.

What he was proposing to do now could be dangerous to his own well-being. He knew that Will wouldn't discover any of his secrets; that wasn't what he was worried about. What worried him was that he could become emotionally entangled.

Hannibal sighed softly, closing his eyes and raising a hand to his head. This was giving him a headache; the repercussions were something he didn't want to think about.

He had to think about them at some point, especially with Will here in his home. He was drawing closer to the boy with each passing day, and the frantic thoughts that had gone through his mind in those moments when he'd believed Will was dead proved it.

He didn't want to be that close. It was too dangerous.

Being physically close was fine; it didn't bother him to be naked with Will, no barriers between their bodies. Ah, but emotional closeness was something else entirely. He couldn't afford that. He couldn't let himself become too close to Will in those terms.

If he did, then he would be surrendering to a part of himself that he didn't want to give any sort of control to. It would weaken him to do so.

One thing that he would never be was weak. Never.

He would have to use this time to build up a resistance to Will's charms, to shore up whatever weaknesses he might have concerning his young lover. He would have to remind himself that Will was not his equal, but his experiment. Nothing more.

Yes, they were friends, he supposed -- if one could be friends with one's lover. And he could readily admit that he cared about Will in some ways. He would hate to see anything happen to Will; he wouldn't want the boy's presence removed from his life.

When something fatal and final *did* happen to Will, it would be because Hannibal had orchestrated that fate and carried it out.

At this point, Will was already broken in so many ways. It would be easy to break him down further, until his dependence on Hannibal was complete. Then, and only then, could he begin to piece Will back together as he wanted him to be.

That would be a fascinating process.

But first, the work of breaking Will had to begin. It was almost a pity to do so; Will had a spirit that wouldn't be broken easily, and Hannibal almost hated to think of taking that away from him, of turning him into no more than a puppet for his own desires.

One of the things he liked most about Will was the fact that young man had a core of inner strength. Will didn't give up without a fight; that was what made him worthy of being with Hannibal. Breaking him wouldn't be an easy process.

He'd already had some help with that, though it hadn't been looked for. He still wasn't happy that someone else had done part of his work for him, but he would adjust.

This would still be a painstaking process, Hannibal told himself, a small smile on his lips. He would have plenty of time to facilitate the start of the breakdown; and by the time he was finished with Will, he would be exactly where Hannibal had wanted him all along.

Uneasy

Chapter Summary

Will is uneasy about the changes in his relationship with Hannibal.

Will awakened slowly, opening his eyes to a bleary, fuzzy world. He raised a hand to rub at his eyes; nothing around him looked familiar, and for a moment, he thought he was in his room at the hospital.

It took him a few moments to remember that he was now in Hannibal's house, that the older man had refused to let him go back home to Wolf Trap. His doctors had agreed, saying that he didn't need to be alone in case he needed anyone's help.

Will had been annoyed with that attitude, but he'd had to admit that he wasn't really looking forward to being alone in Wolf Trap, either. Of course, he'd have the dogs to keep him company, but that wasn't the same as having a person around.

And as weak as he felt now, he needed someone here with him.

Hannibal wasn't treating him like an invalid; he'd given Will the run of the house. He could do anything he chose to do; he could stay in bed, or he could spend time in the library, or the garden behind the house. He had much more mobility than he had in the hospital.

He *wanted* to be at home in some ways, but in others, he was glad to be here. Though he wouldn't be staying long; he was sure of that.

He didn't want to presume on Hannibal's hospitality. Somehow, it didn't feel quite *right* to be staying here, taking up space in one of the spare bedrooms on the second floor of Hannibal's house. While he didn't feel distinctly uncomfortable, it wasn't easy for him, either.

He knew that Hannibal was concerned about him, not only about his physical well-being, but his mental and emotional state. He wanted to tell his lover that he was fine, that he would recover from everything that had happened at a rapid rate.

However, he was unsure of just how quickly he could get past this.

It wasn't as though he was pulling away from Hannibal, Will told himself. He still wanted the other man; he still considered them lovers. But Hannibal hadn't touched him in a sexual way since the day he'd come here from the hospital, and Will wondered if he would.

Was Hannibal waiting for some kind of sign that he was ready for sexual contact? Was he the one who would have to make the first move?

He couldn't bring himself to do that. Yes, he still wanted Hannibal, but a part of him shrank from the idea of being touched. It was as though he could still feel those unwanted hands on his body, as if he could still feel the pain of being taken against his will.

The memory made him shudder; he didn't want to think about it, but it came back to haunt him, in both his dreams and in his waking hours. It was hard for him to reconcile himself to the fact that sooner or later, he would have to let himself be touched again.

Will had never felt so conflicted in his life.

He *wanted* Hannibal to touch him, wanted their relationship to go back to how it had been before. He didn't think that he could live for the rest of his life feeling as though he was once again behind a wall, separated from everyone else, on the outside looking in.

Hannibal had changed all of that the first time they'd had sex. From that moment on, Will had known who he belonged to; he'd felt more alive than ever before.

But there had also been that element of uneasiness that had never left him; he still didn't feel that their relationship was quite on an even keel. Hannibal would always have the upper hand, and there were times when he didn't like the feeling of being controlled.

Still, what could he expect with Hannibal? His lover wasn't a man who would turn over the reins of that control easily; he wasn't the kind of person who could be dominated. Will accepted that; he wasn't exactly a dominant personality.

He was satisfied with their relationship as it was.

But his kidnapping and rape had driven a wedge between them, one that he was afraid he couldn't erase. He didn't want them to be like this; he wanted to be able to go to Hannibal and give the other man his body, to take pleasure in their joining.

But something held him back, a fear of being hurt, of being betrayed. Will didn't know why that feeling grew stronger every day; he only knew that it did.

How could he feel that way? *Why* did he feel that way? Hannibal was the person who had come to his rescue; if not for Hannibal, he would be lying dead on that basement floor. He probably wouldn't even have been found yet.

Hannibal had offered to let him stay here, and was taking care of him. But still, there was a niggling doubt at the back of Will's mind that there was something not quite right about this, that maybe his lover really didn't have his best interests at heart.

Though he had no earthly idea why he should feel that way.

He was just being paranoid, he told himself firmly. Hannibal only wanted the best for him; his lover was concerned about him and didn't want him being alone all the way out in Wolf Trap, with no company but his dogs, away from people who cared about him.

People? That was a laugh, Will thought with an inward snort. The only person around here who cared about him was Hannibal. Jack had made it clear that he just wanted Will to get to

the point where he could come back to work again.

Jack didn't care about him. The people he worked with were just casual acquaintances. Hannibal was really his only friend, the only person who truly cared for him.

That thought shouldn't make him feel so uneasy, but it did. He shouldn't feel that way about the man who was his friend and lover. He should feel more comfortable here, as though he belonged. But he didn't. He felt distinctly as though he was in some kind of danger.

Was it only his recent experience that had made him feel this way?

It had to be, Will told himself firmly. There was no other reason for him to feel like this; he knew that the man who had become his lover such a short time ago didn't mean him any harm. Hannibal didn't want to hurt him; he was only trying to help.

But that uneasy feeling persisted; it wasn't going to just go away, not until he talked to Hannibal and managed to calm his irrational fears.

Sighing, Will kicked back the covers and swung his legs out of bed, taking a deep breath as he stood up. He would have to face this conversation sometime, and it might as well be now. The sooner he did it, then the sooner his uneasiness would hopefully melt away.

Best Interests

Chapter Summary

> Will feels that he owes Hannibal his trust - yet he can't completely push doubts from his mind.

Hannibal stared at Will across the desk, a frown creasing his brow, his hands clasped together in front of him. He looked as though he was digesting all that Will had just told him -- and that it wasn't easy for him to swallow those words.

He shook his head, his frown deepening when he spoke.

"Why, Will?" he asked, his voice very quiet. Will could swear that he almost sounded .... *hurt*. "Why would you think that I don't have your best interests at heart by bringing you here? Why would you think that of the person who saved your life?"

Now it was Will's turn to shake his head; he couldn't meet Hannibal's candid gaze, couldn't make himself look into his lover's eyes.

Why *did* he feel this way? He really shouldn't, not after what Hannibal had done for him. He owed this man his life; he could never let himself forget that. And really, he owed Hannibal so much more, as well. He owed his lover a debt he could never repay.

if it weren't for Hannibal, then he would still be that scared little mouse who hid himself away from the rest of the world, afraid to reach out for what he wanted. With Hannibal, he had become more bold, less afraid of his own needs and desires.

No one else could have done that for him.

He wouldn't have let anyone else get close enough to do that. He wouldn't have let anyone else touch him in the way that Hannibal did. No other person would have had the power, both physical and emotional, to draw him out of his self-imposed isolation.

"Hannibal, I ...." His voice trailed off; he didn't know what to say. "I owe you more than I can ever repay you for. If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be alive. I just .... sometimes I feel like I'm not so much your lover as a kind of experiment for you."

There. He'd said it. The words felt awkward on his tongue, as though they didn't want to be spoken. As though he shouldn't have spoken them.

Will felt a rush of guilt go through him; those words should never have seen the light of day. He knew that they would hurt Hannibal, and that was the last thing he wanted to do. He wanted to bring them closer, not seem as though he was trying to push Hannibal away.

Why did he seem to have such a talent for fucking everything up irreparably?

He couldn't meet Hannibal's gaze; he didn't want to see the disappointment there. He didn't want Hannibal to think that he wasn't grateful -- or that he didn't share whatever tender feelings his lover might have for him. He just felt .... confused.

And guilty. Horribly guilty. He didn't want to feel that Hannibal was somehow manipulating him. He wanted to believe that his lover did indeed have his best interests at heart, that there was nothing behind Hannibal's facade other than concern for him.

It was just hard to believe that Hannibal did *anything* without an ulterior motive. Will couldn't help thinking that even his own seduction had only been a means to and end. It was an uncharitable thought, but he couldn't get it out of his mind.

No. He pushed that thought out of his mind, locking it away and slamming a door on it. Hannibal *cared* for him. He wouldn't be here if that wasn't the case.

He wasn't going to let himself think otherwise. There was no reason to.

Hannibal *loved* him. He might not have said so in those words, but Will could *feel* the other man's emotions whenever they made love, whenever Hannibal gazed into his eyes. The words didn't need to be said. They were there, just under the surface.

Okay, so maybe he was fooling himself. Maybe Hannibal didn't love him as most people understood love. But there *was* an emotional bond there; Will had felt it in those moments when life was fading away and Hannibal had been holding him.

Hannibal had pleaded with him not to die. There had been anguish in those words; the emotions had come directly from Hannibal's heart.

Those words hadn't been spoken lightly. Hannibal didn't want to lose him; that was obvious. But Will couldn't let himself believe that Hannibal's reasons for wanting to keep him here by his side were anything but good ones.

It might not be love, but it was caring. That was a start.

"I'm sorry," he said softly, reaching out to lay his hand on the desk, hoping that Hannibal would take that hand in his own and realize it for the peace offering that it was. "I don't know why I thought that. Just going a little stir crazy, I guess."

Hannibal nodded, though his dark eyes were still somber. "You have to trust me, Will," he said, his voice very soft. "If you don't, then we really do not have much of a relationship, do we? Trust is required before one can open one's heart to another."

"I know," Will said with a sigh. "And I *do* trust you. It's just that .... I've spent such a long time being suspicious of everybody that it's hard for me to open up to trust."

Hannibal nodded, a small smile curving his lips. "I can understand that. But you cannot let mistrust color your entire life, Will. Sooner or later, you have to let those walls down and trust someone. And as your lover, I believe that I am the one you should place your trust in."

Will nodded in agreement; he believed that, too.

"But if you do not feel that you can put your trust in me, then our relationship has to end." Hannibal sounded defeated, even .... *sad*. Will was a little surprised by that; he hadn't realized that ending their relationship would hurt Hannibal so much.

Only he didn't want them to end. He wanted to be with this man; losing Hannibal was *not* an option for him. Not like this. If and when they parted, it would be from a mutual desire to do so, not because they had literally been *forced* apart.

"I'm not ending anything," he said softly, reaching out again to place his hand on Hannibal's. "I *do* trust you, Hannibal. I wouldn't be here if I didn't."

"I hope you can find it in you to keep trusting me, Will," Hannibal said, his voice quiet, taking Will's hand and squeezing his fingers gently. "I would hate to think that you didn't. I am, after all, the man you have chosen to be your lover. A certain amount of trust is expected."

"And it's there," Will whispered. "It always will be."

He was telling the truth. He *did* trust Hannibal. Any niggling little doubts about that would be pushed away and ignored. They weren't worth his attention.

Will closed his eyes, letting the warmth of Hannibal's touch seep into him. From now on, he would put his trust in this man, his lover, the man who had saved his life. He owed Hannibal that trust and that loyalty -- and any doubts that it was misplaced would have to be buried and locked away.

Not on His Agenda

Chapter Summary

Hannibal contemplates ways to regain Will's trust. Falling in love is not on the list.

What could he do to regain Will's trust?

More importantly, how had he managed to lose that trust in the first place? Hannibal frowned, steepling his fingers under his chin as he pondered that question. He had no idea where he had gone wrong, and that fact bothered him terribly.

He needed Will to trust him if he was to facilitate the young man's breakdown. And he needed a complete breakdown if he was to be able to put Will back together again.

The fact that Will seemed to be pulling away from him would destroy all the careful plans he'd made, and he couldn't have that. And beyond that, there was another fact that had been bothering him more as each day went by that Will was in his house.

Will had heard him when he had begged the young man not to die on the floor of that basement. He didn't doubt that Will now realized there were stronger feelings that bound them than mere desire. He was under the impression that Hannibal loved him.

Oddly enough, he wasn't entirely sure that he didn't.

What *was* love? It had never been an emotion that he'd been able to come to grips with; he had accepted long ago that he would never be able to love another person, not as most people understood the concept of "love," at least.

He could have tender feelings for his friends. He had even felt that way about a lover or two in the past, for a very brief time. But what he felt for Will went far beyond that.

Hannibal wasn't sure that he could call what he felt by the name of "love," but he knew that it was more than he'd felt for anyone else in his entire life. There was something about seeing Will in his current state that only made the feeling grow.

Maybe that meant he was falling in love with Will more every day.

He hadn't expected that to happen, but then, he hadn't expected to have Will here in his home, either. He hadn't counted on any of this, and he had to admit that it stymied him, in a way. A monkey wrench had been thrown directly into his carefully conceived plans.

Of course, he was trying to cope with the disruption of those plans as best he could, but these feelings for Will kept getting in the way.

If he could put a name to those feelings and be done with it, things would be easier -- but he was reluctant to call what he felt by the word that most people would use. Maybe it *was* a sort of love, but it was still difficult to admit to that emotion.

Love wasn't something that Hannibal Lecter needed to feel.

Love wasn't an emotion that existed on his agenda. Love would make him weak when he needed to be strong; love would let him coddle Will when he should be pushing the boy to his limits -- and beyond. It would only get in the way.

But at the same time, he needed to regain Will's trust, and cement it. He needed to convince Will that he was indeed loved -- by any means necessary.

He could no longer use sex to prove that; of course, he didn't intend for the sexual drought he and Will were experiencing now to extend much further into the future, but he knew that forcing sex on Will at this point would be counterproductive to his agenda.

Though it was so terribly hard to look at Will and not want to undress him and savor that beautiful body to the fullest, Hannibal thought with a soft sigh. He couldn't stop himself from wanting Will, especially when they were in bed at night.

It was so hard to keep himself from simply taking what he wanted.

Thus far, he'd managed to do so, but barely. There had been times when he had wanted to push Will down, to rip the clothes from his body and thrust inside him until the boy writhed beneath him and cried out his name, begging him to stop ....

With difficulty, he pulled his thoughts away from the path they were traveling down. If he kept thinking like that, then he would have to take a little private time for himself.

Hannibal sighed, closing his eyes. It was obvious that he desired Will, but the emotions that accompanied that desire were growing stronger with each passing day. He was starting to wonder if he could keep holding them back.

The problem was that he didn't *want* to hold them back.

But he couldn't let his emotions interfere with his plans for Will. If he did, then he might find himself backing away from those plans, and he couldn't do that. No, he had to continue down the path that he had begun to tread. There was no turning back, not at this point.

If he was very careful, then he would be able to cement Will's trust in him, and make sure that the young man's emotions were exactly where he wanted them to be.

Once he had achieved that, then his own emotions could be given free rein. By that time he would have gotten them under control, and hopefully, he would have deciphered just what it was that he felt for Will, put a name to it, and compartmentalized whatever emotion it was.

It could be love. But then again, he wasn't yet sure.

If this was love, then he would have to completely rethink his plans. He wouldn't be able to hurt Will -- even though that wasn't really what he'd planned. He wouldn't even be able to give Will the glorious death that he had in mind, and had since they had first met.

No, he wouldn't be able to remove Will from his life. If this was love, then he would *need* Will beside him -- and he might even find that he had to trust Will with all of his secrets. If this was love, and if Will also truly loved him, then he should be able to do so.

Eventually. But it was far from time for that yet. After all, he still didn't know what name to put to this strange emotion that seemed to have taken him over.

He would find a way to regain Will's trust, even if it took some time. He might have to retrace his steps, to painstakingly build up their relationship again. He could do that. It would be frustrating, but the rewards would be worth it in the end.

Hannibal was, above all else, a patient man.

As I Need You

Chapter Summary

Will hopes that simple kisses can be a new beginning for his relationship with Hannibal.

Will closed his eyes, parting his lips further to let Hannibal's tongue slide between them, into his mouth. The kiss was becoming more intimate, more passionate.

More *possessive*.

There was a part of him that wanted to pull back, that wanted to protest, a part of him that felt wary about letting anyone, even Hannibal, be this close to him. But yet another part of him wanted Hannibal even closer, as close as he could get.

That part of him wanted Hannibal inside him, taking him, joining their bodies as one. He hadn't forgotten how it felt, how that joining lifted him to the skies.

He belonged to this man, utterly and completely.

Hannibal's kiss grew more demanding; his arms around Will's waist moved lower, those hands gripping his hips, pulling his lower body closer against Hannibal's. Will didn't squirm away, but he was beginning to feel decidedly uncomfortable.

He knew that Hannibal wouldn't rush him into sex; if he told his lover to stop, then Hannibal would stop. He wasn't ready for this, not yet.

But yet, his body craved more; he needed to be held, to be touched, to be *taken*. To be owned, to be possessed. He need to have the touch of the man who had kidnapped and raped him washed away, to be obliterated from his consciousness.

That wasn't going to happen, and he knew it.

The memory of what had been done to him would always remain. It would never completely go away; he knew that it was ridiculous to hope that he could simply push it to the back of his mind and forget about it. The memory would always be there.

He tried to relax, but he couldn't. His body stiffened, pulling away from Hannibal. The other man sat up slowly, his hold on Will loosening; he looked down at the younger man with a concerned expression, his brows drawing together in a frown.

"Did I hurt you, Will?" he asked, his voice soft. "If I did, then I am sorry. I had thought to ease you into being more intimate slowly, but it's hard to hold back."

"I understand," Will whispered, swallowing hard. "I-I want us to get back to where we were before all of this happened, Hannibal. I really do. It's not that I don't want you, I just ...." His voice trailed off, and he spread his hands out to his sides helplessly.

Hannibal nodded, reaching out to smooth Will's hair back from his face.

"I understand as well," he murmured, his gaze not leaving Will's face. "I know that this is difficult for you. If I could make it all go away, then I would do so."

Will wished that could happen more than anything else in the world. But of course, it couldn't. He had to learn to live with what had happened to him, pick himself up, dust himself off, and keep going. He couldn't let one horrific experience rule his life.

He wanted Hannibal to keep kissing him. Kissing would eventually lead to more -- but for the moment, it was a good place to start.

Those kisses were his lifeline. They let him know that he was still wanted.

"Don't stop kissing me," he said softly, holding out his arms to Hannibal. He felt so exposed, so vulnerable, lying here on his back and waiting for Hannibal to either get up and walk away, or wrap those strong arms around him again. "Hannibal, I need you."

Hannibal nodded, sliding his arms around Will again and pulling him close -- though he was careful to keep their lower bodies from touching. "As I need you, my sweet William."

Really? *Did* Hannibal need him? He was surprised to hear that word coming from his lover; he hadn't thought that Hannibal actually *needed* anyone.

But maybe this man had his own vulnerabilities.

Will closed his eyes as Hannibal's lips met his again; this was where he had to start, at the beginning. He had to let himself relax and learn to trust again, to build up a path that would take him back to the intimate relationship he and Hannibal had shared.

He didn't want to lose that. If he did, then he would be alone again -- and he didn't want to go back to living that lonely, empty life.

This kiss would be the beginning of their new life together.

Will let himself sink into that kiss, giving himself over to it. Yes, kissing would be a start to bringing them back to where they needed to be. And he intended to enjoy every kiss to the fullest.

If You Leave Me Now

Chapter Summary

Will is terrified that Hannibal will leave him after all that's happened.

Will looked up from the book he was reading, sighing softly as he gazed at Hannibal. His lover was at his desk, finishing up some paperwork, and appeared to be concentrating entirely on what he was doing. Will wished that he could say the same for himself.

He had chosen to stay here tonight instead of going home to Wolf Trap, knowing that the dogs had been fed that morning and would be all right. He needed to be with Hannibal.

Only it seemed that wasn't going to happen.

Hannibal had been ... well, distant as of late. It was as though now that Will had been taken by someone else, Hannibal no longer wanted to touch him any more than was necessary. They still slept in the same bed at times, Hannibal still kissed him, but .... something was missing.

He was sure that Hannibal was going to leave him. It was only a matter of time.

Will's eyes filled with tears at the thought; he couldn't hold back a slight sob. He hadn't wanted to make a sound, hadn't even wanted Hannibal to know that he was upset. But his emotions had been too close to the surface lately; he couldn't hold them back any longer.

"Will, is something wrong?" Hannibal had lifted his head from his paperwork, and was watching Will with a slight frown. "What can I do to help?"

"You can act like you still want me!" Will blurted out before he could stop himself. He literally threw his book aside, standing up and heading for the doorway, wanting to get out of the this room and away from his lover before he cried in front of him.

He was almost at the front door before he felt Hannibal's hand on his arm.

Will didn't turn around, but he let that hand restrain him. He didn't want to leave; he just didn't want to burst into tears in front of his lover. He had been doing far too much crying lately; he knew that Hannibal would understand why, but he still didn't like it.

He felt too vulnerable, too exposed, too raw. Everything was still too much on edge, even a few weeks after his abduction. He still felt the violation too acutely.

"Will." Those strong arms were around him; Hannibal was turning him so that they faced each other, pulling him close, letting Will rest his forehead on his shoulder. "I don't mean to

push you away. I am not trying to do that. I'm only trying to be ... cautious."

"So cautious that you don't want to be with me any more," Will whispered miserably.

"That is not true, William." Now Hannibal sounded exasperated, as though he was angered by Will's words. "If I didn't want to be with you, then you wouldn't be here."

"I don't mean be with me as in ... having my company." Will's voice faltered; he had wanted to talk about this, but he felt unprepared. "I mean that you don't want to kiss me or touch me or .... do anything sexual with me. It's like you think I'm .... tainted."

Hannibal placed a finger under his chin, raising Will's face to his.

Will gazed into Hannibal's eyes, seeing nothing there but concern and worry, and .... desire. His heart felt as though it leaped from his chest into his throat at that look; yes, there *was* desire there. Hannibal still wanted him. It was impossible for him to hide it.

The problem was that he wasn't sure how he felt about being desired. He wanted Hannibal to want him, yes, and even to *need* him. But the act itself terrified him.

It had seemed so easy before everything had happened. Hannibal had made love to him -- and sometimes it was just fucking, just sex, raw, pure *need*. That had been acceptable, as well, because he had felt that need right along with Hannibal.

But making love was different. It didn't just involve their bodies.

When he made love with Hannibal, he had to open himself completely, his heart and soul as well as his body. He didn't have a hard time doing that with the man he loved, not at all. It was just that combined with giving his body, it made him feel .... far too exposed.

The man who had kidnapped and raped him had wanted that part of him. He'd wanted Will's vulnerability, his exposure, that raw part of himself that he kept hidden.

That man had wanted the part of him that belonged to no one but Hannibal. He had struggled against giving it, and he had won. But now, he had hidden that part of him so deeply within that he was having a hard time accessing it, even for his lover.

The fact that he was having a harder time than ever with intimacy didn't help, either.

"I was under the impression that you were not ready for us to be sexually intimate, Will," Hannibal said, his voice very soft. "Was I wrong? Are you ready? If you are, then I have no reservations about taking you to bed here and now."

Will was forced to shake his head, struggling to keep the tears back. "No. Yes. I don't know." His voice lowered until it was barely audible. "I'm just afraid that you'll .... leave me."

There. He'd said it. That was his greatest fear; losing the man he loved. Seeing Hannibal walk away from him because he could no longer be what Hannibal needed, or give him what he wanted. He was terrified of losing the one person who made him *feel*.

The one person who meant anything to him. The one person who touched his heart.

The words that he hadn't been able to make himself say before now came pouring out, as though they had merely been waiting for this point in time to make themselves heard. "If you leave me now, then I'll have .... nothing. Not even my heart. I can't deal with that."

"Will." Hannibal's voice was still very quiet; he lowered his head to kiss the tears from Will's cheeks, his lips warm against the young man's skin.

"How could you think that I would leave you because of this? You need me more now than you ever have. I would never leave anyone who was in such need, or in such pain. And least of all would I leave someone who I truly care for. I'm going nowhere. You have no need to worry."

Those words almost brought another rush of tears, but Will managed to hold them back.

"If you don't feel that you are ready for .... complete intimacy, then we can work our way up to that." Will leaned against Hannibal as his lover continued speaking, feeling relief seep through him. "Will, I'm here for you. In every way that I can be."

"Th-thank you," Will managed to whisper, wrapping his arms around Hannibal's waist. He didn't feel that he deserved such consideration, but he was grateful for it.

"I want us not to go back to what we were, Will, but to become something better," Hannibal told him, his voice still very soft, a different note in it than there had been before. Will wasn't sure, but he thought that he could hear compassion along with the concern.

And yes, he could still hear the desire there. Loud and clear.

He raised his face to look at Hannibal, his blue gaze meeting the older man's dark one. Hannibal brushed the tears from Will's cheeks, smiling as he did so. "No more tears, Will. There is no need for them. Any other tears will be happy ones, I trust."

Will nodded, his own lips curving in a soft smile.

Hannibal wasn't going to leave him. He had said that he wouldn't, and Will believed him. He *had* to believe. He had to hold on to the knowledge that Hannibal was his.

Hannibal wasn't going to leave him. And he wasn't going to leave Hannibal, not for any reason. Will leaned his head against Hannibal's shoulder again, relaxing into his lover's embrace. Now all he had to do was leap that last chasm that loomed before him, and all would be well again.

Between Something and Nothing

Chapter Summary

Will feels that he's caught in limbo between two extremes.

Will sighed as he looked up from his desk, taking his glasses off to rub at his tired eyes. He had been grading papers, something that he really didn't like to do; it felt like busy work, even though it was something that he was required to do as a professor.

He just didn't feel like sitting at a desk today, though he'd been doing that more than usual lately. Jack had been hesitant to let him go back into the field; he seemed to think that Will's traumatic experience would have affected his ability to do his job.

Even though he protested that, Jack had been adamant. No field work for the time being.

Hannibal was pleased about that, Will thought with a soft sigh. His lover didn't think that it was a good idea for him to go back to such exhausting work too soon.

But it wasn't soon, Will told himself. It had been three weeks since he'd gotten out of the hospital, and he'd been back at work for over a week now. Hannibal had insisted that he spend some time convalescing, and he had reluctantly agreed.

At this point, it felt as though he'd spent far too much time playing the invalid. He wanted to go back to work, to feel as though he was being useful. He was tired of being treated as though he was made of spun sugar and would break if anyone so much as looked at him.

He was stronger than that, and Hannibal should know it. Even though their relationship wasn't back to the way it had been yet, they were on the right track.

Tonight, he was going to let Hannibal take things a few steps further.

Their relationship had been strained because Hannibal had been holding himself back. Will didn't want that to happen any more. He wanted them to get back to normal.

It had felt good to be able to sleep in Hannibal's arms, to feel completely safe and to know that he had nothing to fear. But they had to move past that now; they had to test the waters of intimacy. It was past time that they do more than just kiss and cuddle.

And truth be told, he missed their lovemaking. He missed feeling Hannibal's hands on his body, feeling his lover inside him. He missed being .... *taken*.

Maybe that was strange thing for a rape victim to say, but it was true. Will sighed again, wondering if there was something wrong with him. If he was a normal person, he wouldn't

feel this craving for sex so soon after he'd been victimized. Would he?

Well, it wasn't really a *craving*. It wasn't the sex he missed so much as the feeling that he belonged to someone.

Yes, that was it. He missed the feeling of security, of stability.

He missed the feeling of knowing that he was wanted, knowing that someone desired him. Of course, he knew that Hannibal wanted him, but when they didn't make love on a regular basis, that feeling slipped into the background and got swallowed up.

He felt as though he was caught between something and nothing -- something being their sexual intimacy, and nothing being the wasteland he was in without it.

Why did he feel so lost without that? Did feeling this way mean that he was some kind of sexual deviant, someone who was hooked on sex?

That would make sense, he told himself, considering that he'd been a virgin when he and Hannibal had first done the deed. Maybe he was just making up for lost time. Maybe there was something in him that wanted all he could get, because he'd gone so long without.

No, that wasn't true. He wasn't some kind of sex addict. Yes, he enjoyed sex with Hannibal, but it wasn't something he couldn't live without. That was obvious, since they hadn't had sex in the weeks following his rape and he hadn't withered away into nothingness.

But now, he was at the point where he felt stronger and more confident. He was ready to let Hannibal take him to bed and do whatever he wanted with him.

Yes, there was a part of him that was still a little hesitant. But he was going to push that part aside and concentrate on being with the man he loved.

He loved Hannibal. He wanted to be with him. There was no reason whatsoever for him to hold back, no reason to feel that he had to take his time. He was ready, he was sure of it. The small bit of hesitation that he felt could easily be pushed away.

He'd felt as though he was lost in a void for too long now.

Without Hannibal's touch, he felt as though he was wandering in a world of nothingness, one that was threatening to swallow him whole.

He needed to hold on to that indefinable *something* that he felt when he was with Hannibal; Will wasn't sure if what they had was love, or simply lust, but he knew that it made him feel alive as nothing else ever had, and he didn't want to lose it.

On his part, he knew that he loved Hannibal. But the other man's feelings for him were far more elusive; he knew that Hannibal cared, but nothing more than that.

If Hannibal didn't care, then he wouldn't have risked his own life to come looking for Will. He wouldn't have breathed life back into Will's body -- or insisted that Will convalesce in Hannibal's home. All of that was proof that he cared.

But was caring the same as love? Will didn't think so. And he was fairly sure that Hannibal wasn't in love with him, though he knew that his lover was fond of him.

It hurt to know that he wasn't loved.

Or maybe he was, and Hannibal just hadn't been able to say the words yet. He was an intensely private man; Will knew that it was hard for him to express his emotions.

Maybe Hannibal felt that strange nothingness at this point, too. Maybe he was just as empty when they weren't together; maybe he felt the same way but just didn't know how to put it into words. With all of his knowledge, all of his suavity, he could also be at a loss.

It was odd to think that Hannibal could feel the same way he did about this, but maybe it was true. Will sighed again, picking up his glasses and putting them back on, once again hiding behind the barrier that kept the world away from him.

He and Hannibal had to talk, before they resumed their physical relationship. His lover was right. They couldn't go back to being what they had been before.

They had to become something different. Something better.

Will had no idea how they were going to work their way towards that, but they had to. He couldn't keep existing like this, between something and nothing, balancing on a tightrope and looking down into a yawning black chasm that he could disappear into at any time.

He hated straddling that chasm, and he didn't want to do it any more. Tonight, he and Hannibal would talk -- and it was possible that they would resume their sexual activities, or at least attempt to begin them again. That would be a start, one that Will was more than willing to make.

Nothing Matters Without You

Chapter Summary

When Will wants to resume their sexual relationship, Hannibal knows that he can't refuse the request.

"I want to go to bed with you tonight."

Hannibal raised his head at Will's words, looking surprised. He'd been sitting at his desk, taking care of the last of his paper work for the day as Will sat quietly on the couch, reading a book. The words had come out of the blue, something of a shock.

"Will, are you sure that you're ready for this?" Hannibal's voice was soft and questioning. "I don't want to rush into physical intimacy. It could be too soon for you."

Will shook his head, his intense blue gaze locked on Hannibal's face. Those sapphire eyes seemed to glow, to draw Hannibal into their depths.

"It's past time we were ... intimate," Will said softly, his voice gaining strength as he continued speaking. "I want to be with you, Hannibal." He looked up at the other man, his lower lip trembling slightly. "Don't you want to be with me any more? Or are you tired of me?"

"My dear William." Hannibal sighed, shaking his head. "Of course I am not tired of you. I just don't feel that we should resume our sexual relationship too soon. You are still suffering from an emotional trauma, even if you body has healed from the physical."

Now it was Will's turn to sigh.

"Has it ever occurred to you that I wouldn't be suffering from emotional trauma so much if I felt like I was still wanted?" he pointed out, looking down at his book again.

Hannibal considered that, turning the words over in his mind. It was possible that Will was right; the feeling of being wanted and loved was one that could go a long way towards helping him get past the emotional trauma of what had been done to him.

He owed Will that. He did indeed want to be with Will; he missed their intimacy, missed being inside Will, holding him in his arms at night as he slept, having *carte blanche* to do whatever he wished with that beautiful body.

He wanted to be with Will just as badly as Will apparently wanted to be with him, if not more so. But he didn't want to rush the recovery process.

Hannibal was sure that if that process *was* rushed, Will would only end up with more trauma, and more intimacy problems that they would have to overcome. And that didn't fit into his plans for their future. He wanted nothing of the sort standing in their way.

But still, if this was what Will wanted .... He sighed softly, closing his eyes.

He couldn't say no. He couldn't hold back. It was ridiculous to even try. He wanted Will with a burning *need* that took over every part of him. If Will were to say those words again -- *"I want to go to bed with you tonight"* -- Hannibal knew that he wouldn't be able to resist.

His self-control would snap, and he would carry Will up to his bedroom. He might even be rougher than he should be, simply because his desire would rage uncontrollably.

He had been without Will for too long. Three weeks had seemed like an eternity. He couldn't help but wonder if it had been the same for Will, if his young lover's body had been yearning for him just as his was every time he looked at Will.

Hannibal's self-control was already at the breaking point; it was so hard for him to sit here and talk to Will, to argue with him against the two of them resuming their physical intimacy. It would be so much easier to simply give in to the urge, to the need.

And that was what he would do, Hannibal decided, getting up from his chair and going to the couch to take the book out of Will's hands and set it aside.

Will looked up at him, his blue eyes widening in surprise before Hannibal reached down to take his hands and pull him to his feet and into an embrace.

When his lips met Will's, it was with an insistence that brooked no refusal.

"I've waited fat too long for you, my sweet William," he murmured under his breath, his voice ragged. "I have tried to be patient, but I cannot wait any longer. I need you, Will. I need to feel you, to touch you, to taste you. I need to be inside you."

"I need you, too," Will murmured against his mouth. "Nothing matters without you, Hannibal. I've felt like a ghost for the past three weeks because we haven't been together."

"You'll be a ghost no longer," Hannibal murmured, his hands moving to the buttons of Will's shirt. He could hardly wait to get those horrible clothes stripped from Will's body so he could see his beautiful boy naked, that wondrous body bared to his gaze.

He had been far too long without being able to look his fill upon Will's beauty; that would stop tonight. He would be able to look at Will any time that he wanted; he was sure that he would no longer feel that he had to deny himself that right.

Will wouldn't hold back. He had already made that perfectly clear. Hannibal wasn't taking anything from him that wasn't being willingly offered, by Will's own decision.

He had free will. He could stop this any time he chose to, and Hannibal would listen.

But he obviously didn't want to stop, and Hannibal agreed with him. It had been far too long since they'd had each other, far too long that they had danced around the subject of resuming their sexual contact. It was time to knock those barriers down.

Here, tonight, in his large bed upstairs, he would take Will again. He would be gentle and loving, and slowly initiate his young lover back into their sexual relationship. He would ease Will into things tonight; there was no need to rush him in any way.

Hannibal actually found himself looking forward to the night ahead, to the gentle intimacies of it. There would be no games tonight. Nothing but intimacy.

It was almost shocking that he could feel this way, that he could actually *want* to put aside the games and simply be intimate with Will.

Will was right. Life had been empty without this; nothing mattered without Will. Of course, they had never been out of each other's lives, but life had seemed very dull and desolate when he hadn't had their physical intimacies to look forward to.

That desolation was in the past. It ended tonight.

There was no reason for either of them to hold back their feelings -- or their needs -- any longer. He pushed aside the fact that it might still be too soon for Will; if his lover insisted that he was ready, then Hannibal would listen to him, and trust that he knew what he wanted.

His hands made quick work of the buttons on Will's shirt, pushing it down those slender shoulders and off, baring Will's flesh to his hungry gaze.

Will hadn't touched him, but Hannibal could sense that he wanted to; still, that could wait. He would let Will undress him once they were upstairs, but these moments were for him, to allow him to drink in the beauty that he had denied himself for three long weeks.

He wanted to look his fill, and to touch. Ah, how he wanted to touch. He wanted to let his hands and mouth roam over this exquisite body before he buried himself inside Will and brought them to the climax that they both so desired; he wanted them to be completely pleasured.

Hannibal had no doubt of his ability to do just that. He would give Will what he needed -- and then, he would give them both so much more.

Will was watching him intently, those blue eyes fixed on his face.

His own gaze matched Will's in intensity; he might not be seeing all that he wanted to as of yet, but he knew that he would once they got upstairs. They would each take what they needed from the other, each of them giving just as much as they took.

Giving was a new experience for him, one that he had never really known until he'd been with Will. Hannibal was surprised to realize that he found it pleasant.

Will was right. Nothing mattered to either of them without the other in their lives; they needed each other to feel complete. That, also was a new experience for Hannibal, one that

would take some getting used to. But he had no doubt that he would, in time.

For now, he simply wanted to take his William upstairs, to give him what he wanted -- what they *both* wanted -- and see where the evening might take them.

Silently, Hannibal held out his hand to Will; when the young man took it, they walked out of the living room and towards the stairs, both of them knowing exactly where they were going. They didn't need words; their desires were focused in the same direction.

Both sets of footsteps quickened as they moved up the stairs.

Giving Thanks

Chapter Summary

After he and Hannibal have Thanksgiving dinner together, Will reflects on how much he has to give thanks for in his life.

He had a lot to be thankful for.

Will leaned back on the couch, sighing and feeling replete. Hannibal had insisted that he stay here for Thanksgiving dinner, and he'd spent the day cooking. Will had also insisted on helping him, so they had been in the kitchen for a long time.

He'd discovered that he actually enjoyed helping Hannibal around the kitchen. Even though he didn't know much about cooking, he could at least do little things.

Hannibal had bought an entire turkey, and together, they had made most of the other food. It had only been the two of them, of course, and Will had thought that it was far too much food for just two people. But they had managed to demolish most of it.

Working in the kitchen had given him more of an appetite than he had thought it. And he'd felt a strange little glow of satisfaction when Hannibal had remarked on his appetite and said that it was a positive sign, and that he must be feeling better.

Little things like that could make him feel happy.

He had so much to be happy about. First and foremost, thanks to Hannibal, he was still alive. He could so easily be a mouldering corpse right now, dead and buried and well on the way to being forgotten by all but his closest friends. He was lucky in that respect.

He could have easily been nothing more than just another victim, another one of the thousands of men who were murdered every year. He could easily be just another statistic. But thanks to Hannibal and his devotion, he wasn't.

How did you thank someone for saving your life, when they insisted that they didn't want the thanks, that it was simply something they'd had to do?

He was more thankful for having Hannibal in his life than he could possibly say. Without Hannibal, he would be so much less than he was. Not only would he be dead now, but even if he wasn't, he wouldn't have the self-confidence that Hannibal had instilled in him.

Well, he was still working on that. But he was getting there.

Hannibal had done so much for him in the relatively short time that they'd been together. He had taken a man who was so shy he wore glasses that he didn't need to shield him from the world, and turned him into someone who actually enjoyed expressing himself.

Well, at least in the privacy of the bedroom, Will thought with a cynical smile. In other places, he still had the tendency to try and melt into the background.

He'd always asserted himself at his job, but that was because he'd never had doubts about his abilities in that field. There were times when he didn't want to speak up, when he felt like Jack's pet freak, but he had always managed to overcome that shyness.

He was starting to assert himself in his romantic life with Hannibal, too -- or at least, he *had* been, before all of this had happened. Will felt as though he'd been pushed back, as though his sexuality had suddenly decided to bury itself again.

He couldn't let that happen. Not now.

Not when he and Hannibal had begun to explore their relationship more than ever, and to knock down some of the boundaries that Will had always hidden behind. He wanted to keep knocking down those walls, until all of them had crumbled to the ground and disappeared.

He wanted to let himself go, to feel completely free with his lover. He wanted to discover a side of himself that he'd never dared to let out before.

Will sighed softly, closing his eyes. It didn't seem like he was going to be able to do that; he felt closed in, as though he was hiding amongst all of the various insecurities that had always blocked him before. Now, they were hiding him away more than ever.

A part of him wanted Hannibal. But another, stronger, part of him was afraid to reach out, just as he had been before that fateful night when Hannibal had taken matters into his own hands and relieved Will of his virginity with no second thoughts.

He'd gladly given that virginity to Hannibal. He would do it again.

That was another thing he had to be thankful for, really -- that he was with someone who he trusted in every way, someone who he loved. He could so easily still be alone, with no one to turn to, no one to talk to who could help him through the trauma he'd faced.

Hannibal had been there for him in ways that no one else would have been. Hannibal had helped him face what had happened, and he could almost feel that he was ready to resume their intimate relationship. Not just yet, but soon. Very soon.

Actually, maybe it would be sooner than he'd anticipated. Strangely enough, he found himself missing their intimacies, missing the closeness.

He was thankful for that closeness; it was something he'd never had in his life before. Something that he'd always been afraid to reach out for with anyone else, afraid of the rejection that he was sure he would have to face, the hurt it would engender within him.

Hannibal hadn't rejected him. He never would.

His lover was always going to be here for him. He had never asked Hannibal point-blank if that were so; he simply knew it in his heart and soul. He and Hannibal had a bond, a connection that most people were never lucky enough to find in their lives.

Yet another thing that he had to be grateful for, Will told himself. If he really searched his soul, he was sure that he would find a lot more.

But for the moment, Hannibal and their relationship was what he was giving thanks for. If he didn't have that relationship, then he would undoubtedly have been killed by the psycho who had abducted him. If not for Hannibal, he would have lost his life.

Hannibal meant everything to him, even though he had a hard time saying that. Even now, when the thought of how much he owed Hannibal, how much he loved him, was uppermost in his mind, Will still knew that he would have a hard time actually getting the words out.

And Hannibal would probably have a hard time accepting them.

The two of them would always go around in circles about this. He was sure of it. Neither of them had an easy time admitting that they needed help -- or accepting that someone was grateful for their help. It was just the way they were made.

But he *was* grateful to have Hannibal in his life, in more ways that he could possibly put into words. He had to trust that Hannibal realized that, and that his lover knew that Will was giving thanks for him at this very moment.

Of course he did. Hannibal seemed to know everything that he was thinking, even before he himself had managed to make the words crystallize in his mind.

Hannibal had insisted on rinsing the dishes and putting them into the dishwasher himself; he had told Will to sit down, and that he would join him momentarily. Any moment now, Hannibal would be sitting down beside him, and their evening would progress.

Will couldn't help feeling that it might end with them in bed together.

He wasn't entirely sure that was what he wanted, but if it happened, he wouldn't say no. He wanted to get their relationship back to the point where it had been before. He *needed* that. He needed to know that Hannibal still wanted him.

Will smiled as he heard the other man's footsteps move through the kitchen. He had the definite feeling that soon, very soon, he would be giving thanks for Hannibal in a very different way.

The Next Step

Chapter Summary

Will finally decides that it's time to take the next step forward in rebuilding his physical relationship with Hannibal.

It was past time for them to take the next step.

Will closed his eyes, curling up under the covers of Hannibal's bed. He was naked, vulnerable, feeling more exposed than he ever had. But he wasn't going to turn back. He needed this; he needed to put his relationship with Hannibal back where it had been.

He'd insisted on spending the night with Hannibal; he'd done it several times since Hannibal had rescued him, but they hadn't yet resumed their physical intimacy. They had come close, but Will had always pulled back at the last moment, unable to move forward.

He wasn't going to do that again, he swore to himself. Tonight, he would cross that barrier, and put the past behind him for good.

That might be more easily said than done, and he knew it. But he was going to push his fears back and let Hannibal do whatever he wanted tonight. If that included making love to him, then he would let it happen. He wasn't going to try to stop it.

He couldn't keep shrinking back, couldn't keep being afraid of intimacy. If he did, then that was letting the man who had kidnapped and violated him win. He didn't want that, not for him, not for Hannibal, and not for their relationship. They deserved better.

Tonight, he was going to let go of the past and walk into the future.

It might not be easy, but he would do it. And Hannibal would help him. His lover knew what he needed, and he was sure that Hannibal wouldn't let him down.

He could hear Hannibal walk into the room, even though his back was turned towards the door. He had known that Hannibal was moving down the hall without hearing his soft footsteps; he could somehow always sense his lover's proximity.

He knew when Hannibal was close to him. There was some kind of current of recognition that constantly flowed between the two of them; it was an instant awareness.

His lover approached the bed, pulling the covers back to reveal Will's nudity to that dark gaze. Will rolled over onto his back, trying to smile. "I know you didn't expect this, but I thought it was about time we .... got things back to normal."

Hannibal looked down at him, those eyes sweeping over his body, that gaze unreadable. After several long moments, he nodded, slipping under the covers next to Will.

This was it, Will told himself. This was the first step.

This was a step he had to take. If he didn't, then he would regret it for the rest of his life. He might not have the courage later. It had to be done *now*.

Are you sure that you're ready for this, my sweet?" Hannibal asked him, his voice low and soft, almost like a caress. "I had intended to work up to it, but you are right. It's been far too long since we last made love, and I want to take us past that hurdle."

Will could only nod, his mouth going dry. That was what he wanted, to get past that hurdle, to break down that barrier and sweep it away.

Hannibal's hands were on him, moving down his body.

Will closed his eyes, giving himself up to that gentle touch. He loved how Hannibal's hands felt; no one else could possibly touch him so gently, yet with so much passion. No one else could make him feel the way Hannibal did.

There was no one else for him. There never had been, and never would be. The thought of being intimate with another person made him shudder.

He only wanted Hannibal. No one else. There was no one else in the world who could match Hannibal, no one else who could ever follow him. No one else was worthy.

He knew what Hannibal intended to do; he knew from the moment that Hannibal reached for the drawer of the bedside table. Hannibal was going to make love to him, and Will wasn't going to say no. He was going to enjoy every moment of what passed between them.

His gaze followed Hannibal's hand, watching him take the tube of lubricant from the drawer and coat his fingers with it. Will's breath caught in his throat, his blue eyes widening; in just seconds, those fingers were going to be inside him, opening him, preparing him.

It felt like this was his first time all over again -- but then, he hadn't known what was coming. This time, he did. He knew what exquisite pleasure it brought.

He needed to relax, he told himself firmly. Relax, lie back, and let Hannibal love him. There was nothing to be afraid of, no reason to be tense or nervous.

This first time together after all that had happened might not be easy, but he had to face that chasm and make himself leap over it. He had to conquer his demons and slay them, and with Hannibal's help, he could do it. He *would* do it. Tonight. Now.

It was time for the barrier between them to come down once and for all.

He couldn't hold back a gasp when Hannibal's fingers entered him, but he relaxed almost immediately as the pleasure began to mount, spreading throughout his body.

Hannibal was a master of the art of touching, he thought, his hips arching upwards as those long fingers expertly massaged his prostate. There was such delicacy in his touch, such a wealth of erotic knowledge at his fingertips.

The exquisite sensations were already starting to feel overwhelming; Hannibal must have sensed that fact. His fingers slid out of Will, leaving him empty, aching for more.

He knew that within a matter of seconds, he would get what he wanted.

When Hannibal lifted his hips, he held his breath, knowing what was coming next. His body tensed, waiting for the inevitable, his breath, even his heartbeat, suspended in time.

And when Hannibal slid inside him, he released that breath, letting his body go limp for a moment, feeling the full impact of what it was like to be entered after going so long without it. It didn't hurt, as he had feared it might. No, it felt entirely *right*.

This was where he belonged, where Hannibal belonged. In each other's arms, their bodies joined as one, each of them loving the other.

There was nowhere else he wanted to be, no one else he wanted to be with. Hannibal was his one and only, his life, his heart, his soul, his all. The man who had so brutally victimized him couldn't take that away from him. He hadn't been able to come between them.

No one ever would. He knew who he belonged to, belonged with. This man who was thrusting into him, taking him, filling him, was the only man he ever wanted to be with.

The only man he would ever willingly give himself to. The only man he would ever love.

Each thrust lifted him higher into paradise, each moment full and perfect and full of bliss. Why had they waited so long to do this again? They shouldn't have. He should have jumped right into this after everything had happened, to reassure himself. To feel .... safe.

To feel .... loved. Because he did. Every movement, every thrust, every touch told him that Hannibal loved him. The way their bodies joined wasn't just physical; it was a joining of hearts and souls as well as their bodies. There was more to them than just the physical.

Maybe no one else would believe that. Will didn't care what anyone thought. All he cared about was that he and Hannibal were here, together, loving each other.

When his climax came, it flowed over him, molten lava spreading through his body. He could feel Hannibal release inside him, feel his lover's body spasm and relax on top of his, the knowledge that Hannibal had taken such pleasure from his body only adding to his own satisfaction.

They were still one, still together, in spite of all that had happened. They were closer now than they had been before; nearly losing each other had made their bond stronger, brought them closer. It had made him realize just what he had.

And made him all the more determined never to let it go.

Will relaxed under Hannibal, sighing softly when his lover rolled off of him and pulled him into those strong arms. The first time was over. A barrier had fallen.

This had been the next logical step for them to take, and he didn't regret it in the slightest, Will thought as he curled up in Hannibal's arms. It was what they'd had to do to get their relationship back on the right track, and it had been past time for that to happen.

He didn't know exactly where their relationship was going in the future, but at least now he knew they *had* a future. One that he hoped would be bright.

He held onto that thought as he drifted off into slumber.

Relinquish Control

Chapter Summary

Will realizes that it isn't enough for him to let Hannibal make love to him -- he has to relinquish control completely to be able to move forward in their relationship.

Will awakened with a start, his eyes flying open. It took him a moment to realize that he wasn't in his own bed in Wolf Trap, but rather, in Hannibal's bed, in his house.

Hannibal was nowhere to be seen when he opened his eyes; when he rolled over and squinted at the clock on the bedside table, he knew why. It was after ten in the morning; his lover probably had patients, and Will had slept so late that he'd even missed breakfast.

It felt odd to be here in Hannibal's bed, odd to be sharing that space again. Though he'd slept here a few times since he'd been released from the hospital, that had been all he'd done. Just slept.

But last night, everything had changed.

He didn't regret it, not in the slightest. He had *asked* for last night. He'd wanted it, wanted Hannibal to sweep away all that had gone before.

He'd wanted Hannibal to make love to him. He had thought that if they were intimate on the level that they used to be, it would eradicate all the memories of what had been done to him, and he would finally be able to move forward.

The problem was that he couldn't. It would take more than a single night of lovemaking to erase the past; he should have known that it would be this way.

Will sighed, rolling over onto his stomach. This wasn't Hannibal's fault, nor was it his. But the blame for their lack of intimacy lay more on him; he should be able to trust Hannibal, should be able to push the past away and let his lover comfort and guide him.

Shouldn't he? he asked himself. Or was he being far too optimistic to think that he would ever be able to do that? Was her overestimating himself?

He needed to talk to Hannibal about this.

He needed to give himself to Hannibal in every way, to relinquish control. That was the only way he would be able to get past what had been done to him.

He had been *forced* to relinquish control of his fate to the man who had kidnapped and raped him. He needed to give that control to his lover freely, willingly. If he could do that, then

maybe he could push aside the fear that rose in him at the thought of losing that control.

There was nothing to be afraid of, Will told himself firmly. Not with Hannibal. His lover might take control, but he would never use it to harm.

Hannibal knew just how far to push him, knew when to break down boundaries and when to let them stand. He could trust Hannibal to be his guide.

Still, the thought of letting those barriers break down was terrifying. It was as though what had happened to him had taken him back to the beginning of his relationship with Hannibal, when he was still unsure and afraid to reach out for what he wanted.

That was frustrating. He didn't want to go back to being that scared, repressed person. He wanted to build on what they'd already achieved so far.

And Hannibal was probably even more frustrated than he was.

Will sighed at that thought, fear seeping through him. What if Hannibal decided that a damaged boyfriend wasn't worth waiting for?

No, Hannibal wouldn't do that to him. How many times had his lover told him that they had a connection which went beyond mere lovemaking? Well, Hannibal hadn't used those exact words, but Will had been able to infer what he meant well enough.

Hannibal had said that he wasn't going to leave him because of something that had been done to him that was beyond his control. He had to hold onto those words.

He had to let himself trust Hannibal, to believe that they were going to stay strong. Here, on the morning aftr the first time they'd been together since everything had taken place, he couldn't let that resolve falter or fail. He had to hold on to his belief in the two of them.

His lover had said that they couldn't go back to what they were before, that they had to move on from here and become something better. That much was true.

Will only hoped that they *could* become better.

He didn't know where this would lead, or where they would end up. But he *did* know that he had to trust in Hannibal, and trust in what they shared.

He wasn't going to let his fears conquer him. He wasn't going to let any uncertainty creep in. He knew what he had to do, what he *needed* to do. He needed to relinquish all control to Hannibal, to let his lover take over, even if that terrified him.

It was the only way that they were going to get their relationship back on a level that would satisfy them both. At the moment, they were both still too skittish.

Even though last night had been wonderful, there was something missing.

Hannibal didn't want to push him, didn't want to control him for fear that it might send him fleeing ,send him back into hiding. And he didn't want that, either. He didn't want to be that

scared person who Hannibal had first pushed across his boundaries.

That would be taking too many huge steps backwards. They'd already moved back enough; now it was time to regain that ground, to move forward again.

He was going to give that control to Hannibal, let his lover do whatever he pleased with him. That would be the only way to move forward, to keep breaking down barriers. Giving Hannibal *carte blanche* with him was a frightening thought, but it was something he had to do.

He had to trust Hannibal to bring those barriers crashing to the ground.

taking a deep breath, Will sat up, pushing back the covers and swinging his legs out of bed. There was no time like the present, and it was past time he and Hannibal had a talk.

An Unexpected Gift

Chapter Summary

Will is offering him a precious gift, but Hannibal is at first unsure whether he should accept it.

Hannibal leaned back in his chair, his gaze on Will, eyebrows raised in question. He studied the young man who sat in front of him, eyes downcast, hands folded in his lap.

This was something that he hadn't expected from Will, at least not at this stage in their relationship. He would have thought that such a need would have come out long before this, not after Will had been brutally violated and was trying to work his way back from that experience.

This was a gift that Will was giving him, something that was completely unexpected. It was, well, *exciting* to think that Will trusted him this much.

Or maybe it wasn't a matter of trust, Hannibal told himself. Maybe Will simply felt that he had to be controlled, to be used. That was worrisome, though at one time, it might have given him great pleasure to do just that. Now, he worried about the effect it could have on Will.

When their relationship had first started, he had thought that he wanted an obedient, submissive Will. Now, he wasn't so sure of that at all.

Now, he wanted Will to be .... simply himself.

He didn't want Will to give himself because he felt that he was obligated to. He wanted Will to turn himself over to him of his own free will, because he *wanted* to do so.

Forcing him had no savour. That wasn't what he wanted from his Will. No, he wanted not just acquiescence, not just capitulation. He wanted Will to *crave* that submission, to *need* it with all of his body and soul. He wanted Will to want this as much as he did.

If that wasn't the case, then Will's surrender meant nothing. It would simply be something that he was doing because he felt that he should.

No, he should *want* to, feel that he *needed* to.

Still, Hannibal couldn't help wondering why he was suddenly thinking in this way. He should simply accept the gift of submission that Will was offering him, take what he was being handed with no questions asked. That was what he would have done in the past.

That was what he would have done before Will's abduction and rape. But now, he felt that what Will was giving him could push them further apart.

That wasn't what he wanted, not at all. He wanted them to become closer, to have more of an understanding of each other's physical selves. He wanted Will to enter into the submissive relationship with him from need, not from fear. And somehow, this felt like fear.

Still, taking what was offered might be more of a temptation than he could resist.

After all, their relationship had always been coming to this, hadn't it? He had subtly been pushing things in such a direction ever since the beginning.

This would simply be a chance to solidify that relationship, to make sure that Will was firmly wrapped in the threads of his spider's web. He would be able to turn Will's mind in that submissive direction; he would be able to mold and shape the young man to his specifications.

Hannibal sighed, reluctantly considering the possible outcomes of that ploy. Yes, he could have Will shaped in the way that he wanted him, with no problems.

And yet .... if he chose to go that route, something of what made his young lover uniquely *Will* would probably be lost forever.

He didn't want that. He didn't want Will to change, didn't want his lover to become a submissive automaton. He wanted Will as he was, even if there were times when Will was hard to decipher or control. He enjoyed all of the challenges that Will presented to him.

And if Will changed, then their relationship would subtly change, as well. There would be no more challenge to it. Some of the enjoyment would go away.

That would only hasten the end, which he definitely didn't want.

So ... should he turn down this gift that Will was offering to him so freely? Or should he accept it, but instead of jumping right in, ease into it slowly and carefully, taking each step one at a time so that he could fully savour every delectable moment?

Yes, that would be the best thing for him to do, Hannibal decided, immediately feeling better once the decision had been reached within his mind.

Yes, that was what should be done. He would accept what Will was giving him; he couldn't find it in himself to turn this gift down, especially as it was apparently so willingly offered. But he would take it slowly every step of the way, and he would make sure that Will enjoyed it.

He would make sure that his young lover was enraptured by all that they did.

Yes, that would be the way to capture Will -- and keep him. It would also be the way to ensure that Will was fully his -- in every way possible.

"So, Will, are you absolutely sure that you want to give me complete control?" Hannibal asked, raising one eyebrow in question. "You do realise that I will take you at your word. Once it begins, there will be no turning back. You will be my submissive in every way."

"But only when we're alone, and not in our psychiatric sessions," Will said with a nod. "And not around other people. Nobody else needs to know."

Hannibal considered that, then nodded in agreement.

"Yes, I agree with you about that," he said. "You're quite right -- no one else needs to know the route that our personal relationship has taken. It's no one's business."

"You got that right," Will muttered. Hannibal almost smiled at the sound of the younger man's voice -- he didn't know if Will was ashamed of the path their relationship was taking, or if he simply wanted to keep his personal life to himself. Whichever it was, he approved.

No one else had to know what went on between them. It was enough that people knew they were involved; no one had the right to peer closely into their private lives.

He didn't want anyone to see into his relationship with Will. It was theirs, and theirs alone. Anyone who had an inkling of what was happening between them, how their dynamics were changing, probably wouldn't approve. And they might try to dissuade Will.

He couldn't have that. No, he wouldn't let anyone try to take Will away from him. Their relationship was taking a turn for what Hannibal considered the better; no one would be allowed to stop that.

This would have to be eased into, but he was confident that he could do so.

"Then I accept the gift of yourself that you are bestowing upon me, Will," Hannibal said softly, getting up and moving to stand beside the young man's chair. He placed a hand on Will's head, stroking his hair, threading his fingers through the silken curls.

This was the greatest gift he could have been given, and he was accepting it in the spirit in which it had been given. He had no choice but to accept, really.

If this was what Will wanted, then this was what Will would have. Hannibal knew that he couldn't refuse, any more than he could refuse to breathe. Wherever this road might take them, he meant to explore it fully -- and to enjoy every moment of that exploration to the fullest.

Shattered Vessel

Chapter Summary

> Will is afraid that being intimate with Hannibal again might be the thing that finally shatters him.

He wasn't broken.

He refused to think like that, Will told himself as he stared into the bathroom mirror. The bruises were gone; there was no evidence left of the trauma that he'd been through, at least physically. But he knew that the inner scars would always be with him.

Will raised a hand to his chest, watching himself in the mirror. What was it about this face and this body that had made a madman want him?

He really didn't get that. He wasn't a bad-looking guy, but he didn't see anything particularly special about himself, either. Sometimes it was hard for him to understand why Hannibal wanted him. Hannibal was a man who could probably have anyone he wanted.

Yet, for some unfathomable reason, Hannibal had chosen *him*. And now, he was holding himself back, which wasn't fair to his lover.

He had told Hannibal that he wanted to give himself over completely, that he wanted their relationship to get back on track. But that was more easily said than done. He could plan to do that even *want* to do it, but he knew that it wasn't going to be easy.

Still, he wasn't broken. Not yet.

He wouldn't let himself be broken. He might have felt that way when Hannibal had brought him home after this had first happened, but he didn't any more.

Will raised his chin, almost glaring at himself in the mirror. He wasn't going to let this take over his life, or destroy it. He might have a hard road to travel as far as getting his relationship with Hannibal back to where it had been, but he could do it.

No, not back to what they had been, he corrected himself firmly. He wanted to take their relationship to another plane, to make it *better* than it was.

They could do that. They *would* do that.

After all, it wasn't just him who wanted their relationship back, who wanted to make it better. Hannibal had to want the same thing. He'd been really patient while Will had dealt with his demons, but it was time to bring that waiting to an end.

He was going to give himself to Hannibal tonight, with no hesitation, and no questions asked. He was going to put all of this behind him and move forward.

Again, more easily said than done, Will thought, biting his lip. He didn't want his resolve to falter, but there was no doubt that it was doing just that. As the evening loomed closer, the time for doing what he knew he had to do drew nearer with every passing moment.

Will smiled ruefully as a thought struck him.

Wouldn't it be almost funny if *this* was what finally broke him, this attempt to take their relationship back to the intimate thing it had been before?

Being kidnapped and raped hadn't broken him; it had only made him a stronger person once he had gotten past the physical trauma and let himself accept the fact that he had done what he had to do to survive. But now, it seemed that he could possibly be broken another way.

Maybe being intimate with Hannibal again, letting his boyfriend have his way with him and do whatever he wanted, would be what reduced him to shattered fragments.

Maybe this would be what finally destroyed him, what made him feel as though he was utterly broken and could never put the pieces of himself back together again. Maybe this was what it would take to reduce him to nothing more than a shattered vessel.

Will closed his eyes, taking a deep breath and trying to steady his trembling hands. No. This wasn't going to break him. This was going to make him a stronger person, make him able to go on and let himself be the person he had been moving towards being before his abduction.

Hannibal wouldn't try to break him; he knew that. Hannibal wanted to build him up and make him stronger. But he wasn't entirely sure that would happen.

He *wanted* to be a stronger person. He wanted to move ahead, to leave all of this behind him until it all seemed like a vague memory, as though it had happened to someone else. But at the moment, it was all still so fresh in his mind.

He still had nightmares, dreams that made him wake in the dead of night with a scream caught in his throat and his hand pressed against his chest.

Maybe it was too soon. Maybe he wasn't ready yet.

But that wouldn't be fair to Hannibal, would it? He took another deep breath, then another, trying to calm his nerves. He'd already told his lover that he wanted to give himself completely, to relinquish all control, and Hannibal had accepted those words.

There was no turning back now. He'd already made that commitment; he couldn't simply turn away and change his mind. That would only make Hannibal angry.

For all intents and purposes, he'd committed himself to moving forward. If that movement broke him, then he had only himself to blame for doing it too quickly. Hannibal had cautioned him about that, but he hadn't been able to listen. Maybe he should have.

Maybe he was expecting too much from himself.

Will gazed at himself in the mirror, at his pale face, his nude body. This was the body that Hannibal wanted, the body that he had promised to give unrestrainedly.

Could he do that? Or was he moving too quickly? Was he still too broken to think about resuming his sexual relationship with Hannibal? Was he making a mistake? There were so many questions in his mind, and he didn't have the answers to any of them.

Will sighed softly, closing his eyes to block out the sight of himself. Maybe he wasn't broken yet, but he couldn't help thinking that soon, he would be.

But he'd made the commitment. He couldn't turn back now.

If this broke him, then he would simply have to work to put the pieces back together. But somehow, he didn't think he would end up broken. He might not be stronger, but Hannibal would be careful not to break him. Hannibal would know when to pull back.

He wouldn't want a broken boyfriend, so he would be careful to make sure that he didn't push too hard or go too far, Will reasoned with himself. That made perfect sense.

He was going to put on his clothes, go downstairs, and have dinner with Hannibal -- and then later tonight, they were going to go to bed together and be sexually intimate for the first time since his abduction. It was going to be good for both of them.

Will swallowed hard, turning away from his reflection. He had to believe that. He had to believe that this was going to be easier than he thought.

He squared his shoulders, straightening up. He wasn't going to let this break him. He was going to go into it with an open mind, and he was going to enjoy it. After all, if what had already been done to him hadn't broken him, then being with the man he loved wasn't going to.

He could only hope that was the truth.

Good Changes

Chapter Summary

Will wants any future changes in his relationship with Hannibal to be good ones.

Will sat at the table with Hannibal, watching his lover.

So much had changed in their relationship, and it felt as though another change was coming soon -- maybe much sooner than Will was ready to face it.

But he'd committed himself to this, he told himself firmly. He wasn't going to back down. He was going to relinquish all control over their sex life, let Hannibal lead him to wherever he wanted to go. He wasn't going to hold back any longer.

If he didn't, he was sure that he'd become more timid, and Hannibal would eventually get tired of dealing with his problems and turn away from him.

He couldn't let that happen.

Losing Hannibal wasn't an option for him. Losing all that they shared, all that Hannibal had come to mean to him, would be ripping away a part of who he was.

If he and Hannibal lost each other, he would lose more than just a lover, a relationship. He would lose a part of who he had become since he and Hannibal had been together, and that would be a tragedy. It would be a huge step backwards for him.

Hannibal had lifted him out of himself, made him become something more than what he had been. He had started to become more sure of himself, more confident.

Will didn't want to lose that part of himself. If he did, then he would be back where he'd started, hiding away in a shell, rarely ever coming out of it.

He hadn't liked that person very much. He'd always wanted to be more bold, more open, and Hannibal had brought out that side of him. He'd started to scuttle back into that shell since his ordeal, and he didn't want to. He wouldn't. Not this time.

He'd changed so much since he and Hannibal had been involved, and he thought those changes were for the better. He didn't want them to reverse.

It was up to him to make sure they didn't.

He was going to take matters into his own hands. Things were *not* going to change, Will told himself determinedly. He wouldn't let them.

He and Hannibal were going to keep moving down the path that they were already on; he wouldn't let what had been done to him affect his relationship. It might be a struggle for him, at least at first, but he *would* get back to where he'd been before everything had happened.

They would get over this bump in the road, and if there were any more changes to come, he'd make sure that they would all be good ones.

This time, when the changes came, he would be ready for them.

Put Me on Top

Chapter Summary

> Will finally gathers the courage to leap the abyss in front of him and give himself to Hannibal.

Will swallowed hard, forcing himself not to look towards the door that connected Hannibal's bedroom to his private bath, looking up at the ceiling instead.

He was lying on Hannibal's bed, waiting for what would come.

Why did he feel like a .... well, a *sacrifice*? That was ridiculous. He *wanted* this, wanted to be made love to, to be touched and taken.

He wanted their relationship to go back to what it had been. Well, no, that wasn't entirely true. He didn't want exactly what they had been before. He wanted something better, something that was more loving and more .... permanent. Yes, that was it.

Before, he had never been sure that Hannibal wanted him on a permanent basis. But now, he needed to feel that the two of them had a definite future.

Will was sure that Hannibal wanted that, too. IF he didn't, then he wouldn't have agreed to what Will had proposed -- to give himself completely to Hannibal in every way, to relinquish all control, to let Hannibal do whatever he wanted with him.

It was exciting to think of having that kind of freedom, of not having to hold himself back or to even *think* about what was happening between them.

He would simply let Hannibal take the reins.

Hannibal emerged from the bathroom, and Will had to fight the urge to cover his nude body with his hands. It almost felt odd to be looked at.

But he kept his hands still, merely looking up and meeting Hannibal's gaze as the other man approached the bed, then lay down next to him. He was careful not to look at Hannibal's body; he didn't want to look as though he was eager for what was going to happen.

In fact, he wasn't sure just *how* he felt about this. It was what he felt he had to do, but he was still more than a little afraid.

Maybe not afraid, he amended silently. More .... wary.

Hannibal lay back against the pillows, looking up at Will with a lazy smile curving his lips. "Will, I want us to try something tonight that we have never done before."

"What would that be?" Will could feel his heart rate speeding up; he didn't know what Hannibal had in mind, but he was sure that it would be something unusual. If they'd never done it before, then it had to be some kind of position that was out of the ordinary.

Not that Hannibal would do anything to hurt him, he was sure. Not after what he'd already been through. But his lover seemed to be jumping into this head first.

"Don't look so wary, Will." Hannibal's voice was soft, almost a caress. "You know that I have no intention of doing anything that I don't believe you are ready to handle. I think this is something that we will both enjoy. I want you to be on top of me."

Will understood immediately what Hannibal was after; the thought of being on top of his lover, his body on full view for Hannibal to appreciate, made his cheeks flush with embarrassment.

He'd never .... *exposed* himself in that way before.

But it wasn't as though he couldn't do it. And maybe it would be easier, this first time, for him to be the one who was more in control.

"I think you need to be in command of how deep the penetration is, and when you are ready for it," Hannibal continued, pillowing his head on his hands. "I know that you want to relinquish control, Will, but we may have to work up to doing that."

Will nodded slowly, accepting Hannibal's words. His lover was right. He couldn't simply hand over the reins of control; it would feel as though he was a captive again.

This was the way to take things. Slowly, one step at a time.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked, his voice slightly breathless. He didn't know what Hannibal had in mind, but whatever it was, he was willing to give it a try.

"I want you to be on top of me, Will," Hannibal told him, his voice very soft. "I want you to ride me. That way, you control how deep the penetration is, and you control when you are ready to take me in. You can take your time, and do what is most comfortable for you."

Will blinked, surprised at what Hannibal intended for them to do. He hadn't thought of this; it hadn't occurred to him that he could be in control in such a position.

But the more he thought about it, the more it appealed to him. There would be no sudden moves, nothing to make him feel that he had to fear any kind of pain.

He could take his time, and just as Hannibal said, he would control what happened. They would both get a lot of pleasure out of it, and hopefully, he would be able to get past the fears that had held him back ever since his traumatic ordeal.

"It sounds like a great idea to me," he said, sitting up. With a smile, he moved to straddle Hannibal's body, looking down at his lover and locking his gaze with the other man's.

There was no turning back now.

Hannibal slowly reached for the tube of lubricant that was sitting on the bedside table; Will hadn't noticed it before, but his lover had obviously made sure it was there.

"Spread your legs for me, lovely," Hannibal whispered, uncapping the bottle and coating his fingers with a generous amount of the the thick, slippery substance. Will did as he was told, closing his eyes and waiting with bated breath for those fingers to touch him.

When they did, his breath hissed in, then out again; one finger circled his entrance, then slipped inside him, quickly joined by another only a few seconds later.

It didn't hurt. There was no pain, none at all. It felt *good*.

Within moments, he was writhing on top of Hannibal; the sensations caused by those long fingers stroking against his prostate were flowing through his body.

But there was more to this than just manual stimulation. Will swallowed hard as Hannibal's fingers slipped out of him; he knew what he was expected to do, and even though he wanted this, a part of him was afraid to move, afraid to upset this delicate balance.

He had to move; he had to set this in motion. There was a reason that he had been put on top, and there was no longer any reason to delay.

Slowly, carefully, Will eased himself down on top of Hannibal, gasping when the large, blunt head of his lover's cock pressed against his entrance. He took a deep breath, closing his eyes, knowing that there was going to be some inevitable pain.

It wouldn't last long, he told himself firmly. The pain would quickly turn to pleasure, and he would finally have gotten past the trauma that had held him back for so long.

He pushed his hips down in one quick, decisive movement.

A cry broke from Will's lips as Hannibal's own hips pushed upwards, penetrating him with one hard thrust. He stilled his own hips, his body rigid.

It was impossible to stay still for long. The feeling of Hannibal filling him was something he'd been waiting for, unconsciously, for quite a while now; there was nothing to hold him back at this point, nothing to keep him from taking what he so desperately wanted.

Will raised himself up, then let himself slide back down onto Hannibal's cock again. He heard what sounded like a soft, keening wail, a sound more of pleasure than of pain.

It took him a moment to realize that the sound was coming from his own throat.

There had been a momentary flash of pain when Hannibal had driven inside him, but now everything was pure pleasure, enveloping him like a velvet glove.

Will moved up and down on Hannibal's cock, his thighs tightening with each movement. He could feel his lover's hands on his narrow hips, guiding him, making sure that he didn't fall to one side or the other, those hands strong and sure on his body.

He wanted to cry out in pleasure, in triumph. He had done it -- he had leapt the abyss that had seemed to stretch so far in front of him, and he was safely on the other side.

He was safe in Hannibal's arms, safe in his bed. Nothing was ever going to come between them again; now that he had finally managed to conquer his fears, they would never again overtake him, or keep him from having all that he wanted and needed.

Will could feel his orgasm breaking free deep within him, rising to the surface, threatening to overcome him, to wash over his body and sweep all else away.

When it did, he was almost unprepared for the rush of sensation.

He was swept up to the stars; he was sure that if he raised a trembling hand above his head -- if he had the strength to move his limbs -- that he would be able to touch heaven.

With a soft cray that was half-groan, Will collapsed forward onto Hannibal's chest, resting his forehead on his lover's shoulder, closing his eyes. He felt completely boneless; he was sure that it would be a very long time before he could force himself to move.

Hannibal wasn't inside him any more; he had broken that intimate contact when he had pitched forward, but right now, that didn't seem important.

They had broken the barrier. They had come together, in love and desire.

"That was a good idea, to put me on top," Will murmured into Hannibal's shoulder. At the moment, he didn't think he had the strength to say anything else.

"Yes, it was, my beauty," Hannibal said, his voice very soft. Will could feel those long fingers stroking his hair, then moving down his back. They were warm, strong .... *possessive*. Hannibal was claiming him with only a touch, only a caress.

That was what he wanted, Will thought tiredly. He wanted to be claimed, to be owned. And he wanted no one but Hannibal to put that kind of claim on him.

This was all he wanted. This was where he needed to be.

Dimly, he felt Hannibal moving slightly, turning onto his side. Will was enveloped in those strong arms, and he drifted off to sleep, a contented smile curving his lips.

Victorious

Chapter Summary

> Last night was a victory for him, but Will isn't sure if he's ready to take that victory one step further.

So last night had been a small victory for him.

Will lay in Hannibal's bed, listening to the water running in the shower. Hannibal had closed the bathroom door in the master suite, but he could still hear it clearly in the quiet room.

Or had it been a fairly large victory, instead? It had felt wonderful; Will had to admit that. There had been no pain, and no fear, which had surprised him. He'd expected himself to be a little hesitant about penetration after what had been done to him.

But that had been weeks ago, and he should be past it by now, he told himself firmly. He'd leaped the abyss. There was no longer anything to be hesitant about.

Yes, last night had been a victory, for both himself and Hannibal.

He hoped that he'd gotten their relationship back on the right track, but he was still curious about what he had brought up with Hannibal only a short while ago.

What would it be like to let himself go completely, to give himself over to Hannibal without retaining any of the control that felt so precious to him? What would it feel like to know that Hannibal could do whatever he wanted with him, and that he had no say in the matter?

A part of him shrank away from the idea, but as he thought about it, Will was more determined than ever to go ahead with what he'd proposed to his lover.

Hannibal had agreed, and Will had the feeling that he was looking forward to assuming complete control in their relationship. He seemed to have no problem with that.

But hadn't Hannibal *always* had full control? Will mused. Hadn't he always been the leader, and Will the follower? Yes, that was true -- but he'd always had the option of saying no to anything that Hannibal had wanted to do, to refuse anything he didn't feel comfortable with.

He was sure that if they went ahead with this, then he would lose all rights to refusal. Hannibal would be free to do anything he chose with impunity.

Will wasn't sure that he liked that idea, now that he thought about it.

But he'd been the one to bring it up, and a part of him still wanted to go through with it. It would be another victory for him, winning out over his own fears.

He needed that. He needed to push all of those fears aside for good, to get them out of the way so that he would never stumble over them again. He needed to put the past behind him, and to move ahead in his life with Hannibal, minus the baggage of the past.

He *would* do that, Will told himself as he sat up in bed. He heard the shower being turned off; in just another few moments, Hannibal would come back into the bedroom.

Will intended to greet his lover with a smile, and an embrace.

Public Declaration

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal have vastly different ideas of what constitutes a "little party."

Will glanced around at the crowd of people in the room, feeling out of place.

When Hannibal had told him that he intended to have a party, he'd expected a small dinner party of maybe half a dozen people, nothing like this.

It turned out that Hannibal had meant to have a party with what felt like hundreds of people invited, with all of them seeming to know just what his relationship with Dr. Lecter was. Everyone kept throwing glances his way, acting as though he was somehow the guest of honor.

How much had Hannibal told people about the two of them? Will hadn't thought that anyone knew about their relationship, but obviously, he was wrong.

He couldn't shake the feeling that everyone *knew*.

It wasn't as though he and Hannibal *had* to keep their relationship a secret, Will told himself as he smiled at a woman who he didn't know. It wasn't a dirty secret.

But he didn't want Hannibal accused of compromising his professional ethics by dating a patient. Even if he wasn't *technically* a patient, there would be people who would look askance at the two of them, and the rumors wouldn't be pleasant to deal with.

Though if Hannibal wanted their relationship out in the open, who was he to complain? It wasn't like having things known would hurt his own reputation.

No, he would probably be looked at with envy by people who admired Hannibal. There would always be a few people who would covet what he had; he could only feel sorry for them, knowing that their attitude would probably mean that they'd spend their lives alone.

And then there would be people who would want to get to know him, simply because he was the person who Hannibal Lecter chose to be with.

Those were the people who were probably the more interesting ones.

Will caught Hannibal's eye across the room; he raised one eyebrow, glancing around him again before his gaze returned to his lover's. He had meant to indicate his surprise that so many people were here, but he wondered if he'd telegraphed his intentions correctly.

Hannibal was already making his way across the room to Will, but it was slow going for him; people were stopping him every few steps, wanting to talk to him.

He would probably have to get used to that, Will thought with a sigh. Everyone wanted a piece of the man he was involved with; Hannibal was a popular person, in spite of the fact that a lot of the time, he seemed to eschew other human company in favor of his own.

He'd have to wait patiently for his boyfriend to reach his side.

His boyfriend. It felt strange to think of Hannibal in those terms, but that was what he was. They were in a relationship; they were dating. Boyfriends.

Would others look at him strangely now that they knew he was involved with a man? Will really didn't care about that; to him, love was love, no matter what the gender, and he didn't think much of people who were unduly prejudiced in that regard.

But it would still feel strange to realize that everyone he worked with knew about his relationship, and that they might be silently judging him behind his back.

Will shrugged the thought away. Even if they were, what did it matter?

He was the one who was in a good relationship. He was happy. And as long as he made Hannibal happy, too, then nothing else was really important.

It took Hannibal a while to make his way across the room to where Will stood with his back to the wall, a drink in his hand, looking around him almost nervously. He smiled slightly when Hannibal reached out to brush a hand across his cheek.

It was an intimate gesture, a familiar one. Will couldn't help but wonder who might be watching, and what they would make of such a simple yet possessive movement.

Again, he didn't think he really cared. What he and Hannibal were to each other shouldn't matter to anyone else. It was no one's business but theirs.

"This little soireé has turned out quite well, hasn't it?" Hannibal said, obvious pride in his voice as he looked around the room. "Everyone I invited is here, and I believe that they all brought a guest with them. It can be said that this party is a rousing success."

"If this i what you call a 'little soireé' then I'd hate to see what you would call a really big party," Will said, attempting to make a joke.

Hannibal glanced at him with humor in his eyes, and in his voice when he spoke.

"When I decide to throw a large party, then you will probably be overwhelmed by it, dearest William," he said, his voice soft, laughter in his tone.

But Will didn't think that Hannibal was laughing at him. Somehow, he could sense that the joke wasn't on him; no, the laughter was loving, not derisive. And Hannibal was right; he more than likely *would* be overwhelmed by a large party, and feel shy about being there.

He was actually feeling that way now, and to Hannibal, this was just a small soireé. He probably didn't even think there were many people here.

The two of them had very different ideas about what constituted a party.

Will wasn't even sure just why Hannibal had decided to have this party tonight; he didn't think there was a special event to celebrate. But then, Hannibal seemed to enjoy having parties, whether it was a small, intimate dinner, or a crowd like this one.

He himself wasn't a social animal, but he knew that Hannibal was, in some ways. So he had to adjust, had to make the effort to go along with these events.

He had to make himself fit into Hannibal's world. If he didn't, then they would end up drifting apart, and that was the last thing he wanted. After Hannibal had saved his life, Will was sure that his lover didn't want that, either. They both wanted to be together.

Though they were so different, being together wasn't always easy.

People were probably thinking about that right now, Will mused, sipping his drink as his gaze traveled to the other people around the room. About how different they were.

They were an odd match, that couldn't be denied. They must look so vastly different, standing here beside each other. Even though it might be obvious to some that they were a couple, they couldn't be more polar opposites, either in looks or in demeanor.

Hannibal was polished and suave, and Will knew that beside him, he probably looked disheveled and even a little unkempt, even though he was wearing a suit and tie.

Still, with his unruly curls and razor stubble, he didn't have Hannibal's suave urbanity, and he never would have. He just wasn't that type of person; he would always be rough around the edge, unpolished and more than a little rough. It was simply who he was.

And if people didn't like that, then they didn't have to be around him, he told himself firmly. But if they were to be accepted into Hannibal's world, then they would have to accept Will.

He was part of Hannibal's world, part of his life. An important part.

Now, everyone knew that. The people who were here tonight knew that he and Hannibal were together, that they were a couple. Hannibal had made that clear.

Suddenly, Will's unease about having the world at large know that they were together seemed to melt away. Why was he worried? It was plain that Hannibal wanted him here, that this man had *chosen* him to be by his side. It was a distinction, an honor.

If people didn't like that, then they didn't have to be here. Wanting to be a part of Hannibal's world meant accepting that Will would be a part of that world, as well.

This soireé was intended to get that point across.

And apparently it had, Will thought as he watched people glance at the two of them, then return to whatever they had been whispering about with their compatriots.

Maybe they were talking about what an unlikely couple he and Hannibal made, he thought with an inward smile as he moved closer to his lover. Maybe they were shocked, or maybe just amused. Either way, there was no reason for him to care what they thought.

He and Hannibal were together, and tonight was a public declaration of their relationship. As long as the two of them were happy with that, what anybody else thought of it didn't matter.

He was happy. And for the moment, that was good enough for him.

Skin To Skin

Chapter Summary

> Now that the party is over, all Hannibal wants is to be skin to skin with Will in the privacy of his bedroom.

He had watched Will all through the party like a hawk.

Now, all he wanted to do was to take his young lover upstairs, to strip him out of that expensive suit he was wearing, the one that Hannibal had bought for him.

He wanted to reveal that glowing, almost pearlescent skin, feel its velvety smoothness under his fingertips, be skin to skin with Will. He wanted to lay the young man down on his bed and worship that gorgeous body with his hands and mouth.

He wanted Will to writhe under him, to beg for him, to plead to be taken. And then he wanted to slide into Will, to fill him and make him his own.

He wanted to find his home within Will Graham.

Being inside Will was a paradise he had never thought he would attain; he'd thought at first that he would only have glimpses of it, but that he would never dwell there.

Now, he knew better. There was a bond forged between himself and Will, a bond that had only grown much stronger with time. When he had saved Will's life, literally brought him back from the edge of death, that bond had been sealed forever.

Will's ultimate fate had been in his hands then, and he had chosen to draw the young man closer to him, to plead with Will not to leave him.

That plea had touched him, shaken him much more than he had realized.

And he had meant every word of it. He didn't want a life without Will by his side.

He had never thought of himself and his life in terms of love before. He had long since given up the idea that he *could* love. He hadn't looked for love.

But somehow, miraculously, he had found it. He had spent hours dissecting his feeling for Will, and he had come to the conclusion that they couldn't be anything but love. Why else would he have felt so devastated by the idea of losing him?

Now that he had found love, he intended to celebrate it in every way possible. He would never let Will go; they would always be together.

He intended to further strengthen their union, both emotionally and physically.

The party was over, and the last guests were leaving. Within a few moments, he would be able to take Will upstairs, and enjoy the rest of the night to the fullest.

He would leave everything else for tomorrow; tonight, he wanted to be skin to skin with Will, to forget about everything else other than the sheer pleasure of taking the man he loved. Yes, *loved*. He could say the word to himself now. it was no longer difficult.

Besides, he had an idea that he wanted to approach Will with. He was sure that there would be a bit of resistance at first, but he could talk Will into it.

But first, they had the rest of the evening to enjoy themselves.

Take A Bite

Chapter Summary

Hannibal contemplates just what he intends to do to Will tonight.

Oh, how he wanted to take a bite out of Will.

Not literally, Hannibal told himself. No, that pale, glowing skin was far too lovely to mar with actual bites, too velvety smooth to tear and rend with teeth.

But he *did* want to leave some bite marks on Will's body; he wanted to mark his boy as belonging to him, in a way that he never had before. He didn't know how Will would react to the idea, but he intended to do just that tonight, and see what sort of reaction he got.

WIll shouldn't mind, he thought to himself. He had said that he was ready to turn himself over to Hannibal in every way, to relinquish all control of their sexual life.

He was ready to test Will's commitment to that statement.

He'd thought that he would talk to Will about this, but the moment he had seen his young lover undressed, all thought of merely *asking* had flown from his mind.

Will was already lying in bed, waiting for him. He'd excused himself to make a quick trip to the bathroom, more to think about what he would do with Will tonight than anything else. He wanted to push past a few barriers, while simultaneously giving them both pleasure.

Yes, he wanted to exert his mastery over Will, but he didn't want that control to come with uncertainty or pain. He wanted Will to enjoy it.

Only if his young lover enjoyed what they did would he keep coming back for more. And after what Will had been through, Hannibal had no wish to force him into anything.

He was positive that force would only send Will scuttling back into the self-imposed isolation he'd hidden himself in before Hannibal had taken him in hand and shown him that he was a sensual being. Will would be condemning them both to unhappiness if he did that again.

He wouldn't let Will hide himself away. He would draw the young man out, little by little, until he was more sexually confident and willing to explore his boundaries.

And tonight, he would take a bite out of Will. Well, figuratively.

Hannibal could already visualize the small love bites that he would leave on Will's body. A few on his chest, around his lovely nipples, and down his stomach ....

A bite here and there on his throat, artfully arranged. Probably only one or two; he didn't want Will to have a hard time hiding those marks if he chose to do so. He wouldn't force his lover to show off the fact that he was owned, that he had been claimed.

And of course, the *coup de grace* -- a series of lovely little bite marks down Will's slender thighs, mark that would arouse him the next time he saw Will unclothed.

Hannibal smiled in anticipation. This would indeed be a night that he would savour.

Intertwined

Chapter Summary

Hannibal realizes the enormity of his love for Will while they're making love.

Hannibal kept his eyes on Will's face, not wanting to miss a single expression.

He thrust again, almost gasping as the tight vise of Will's body closed around him, welcoming him inside, almost seeming to draw him into that smoldering heat.

He had left marks on Will's body, and now, he was claiming his young lover in another way, in a way that was primal and instinctive. He had been unable to keep from taking Will, unable to stop himself from pulling the young man close and driving inside him.

And Will had wanted this just as much as he had, Hannibal reminded himself. Will's body had opened and welcomed him, rather than pushing him away.

He had worried that this might be too rough, that it might still be too soon for this kind of joining so soon after what had happened to Will, but the young man seemed to have put all that aside and let his desire take over. Hannibal was glad of that.

He wasn't sure that he would have been able to hold himself back from this, even if Will hadn't welcomed his advances with open arms.

There was a distinct possibility that he might have simply taken what he wanted.

No, he would never have done that, Hannibal thought, shocked into immobility for just a moment. Will had been raped by someone else; he wouldn't do that to his lover.

Just the thought that he could hurt Will in that way shocked him to the core; for a few heartbeats, his hips stopped their rhythm, and his body seemed frozen, unable to do anything more than focus on that single horrifying thought.

He would *never* do anything to hurt Will in that way. In fact, if Will told him to stop what he was doing, he would -- even though it would be difficult.

Will would never suffer in that way at his hands.

No, whenever he and Will joined their bodies, he would strive to make the experience as pleasurable as he possibly could for both of them.

Their lovemaking would only be full of joy, and if there *was* a little pain at some point in the future, it would quickly be replaced by pleasure.

Will would never know pain from him -- at least, not *that* sort of pain. He might push Will's barriers at some point, he might break down some boundaries, but he would never do anything to truly harm Will, not in the way that his rapist had harmed him.

He loved Will far too much for that. He accepted that love, accepted that it came with boundaries that he couldn't allow himself to cross.

He would never do anything that he wasn't sure Will wanted, somewhere deep within himself. Even if that meant holding himself back, he would honor Will's wishes.

All of those thoughts went through his mind in only a few seconds, and then disappeared; then he was thrusting his hips forward again, Will's name leaving his lips in an explosion of sound, followed by a soft groan of pure passion.

Nothing had ever felt like this; every time he was inside Will felt more intense than the last. Their couplings only got better with time, their bodies more attuned to each other.

He instinctively knew what Will wanted and needed -- more of him, more of being filled, being taken, being held against Hannibal's heart and physically sated.

It was exactly what he wanted to give Will, in every possible way.

Was this love? Was this feeling of being utterly complete when he was inside Will what those four letters were meant to express?

Hannibal wasn't sure that he had ever known love, but he couldn't doubt that he was feeling it now. Making love to Will was more than the sum of the physical sensations, more than simply *wanting*. It was knowing that his life would be incomplete without this man.

This feeling of being intertwined, not only their bodies, but their hearts and souls as well, every part of them .... this *had* to be love.

He loved Will. He loved what they had together, what he could never have with anyone else.

He loved *this*, he thought as his hips thrust forward again of their own volition. He loved being inside Will, being buried deep within that well of pleasure, joining their bodies.

He'd never felt such passion with anyone else; no one else had ever given hm as much pleasure as Will did. It wasn't only in the joining of their bodies; it was in the knowledge that Will loved him, that Will wanted to be with him, that their *lives* were joined.

They had been down a long road together, through some very dark hours. And now, they had come out on the other side, slightly singed from their trial by fire, but victorious.

The two of them would always be this way, Hannibal told himself, his gaze fixed on Will's face, watching as a pink flush suffused his lover's cheeks, as Will's passion-swollen lips parted on a whisper of Hannibal's name. They would always be together.

This was only the first time they would make love like this, the first time their voices would cry out in unison as they found ecstasy together.

Will was his, and he was Will's. Forever.

Nothing could part them; nothing could tear them from each other. Each of them was where he belonged, and neither of them would ever be moved.

His climax broke over him in a wave of pleasure, at the same moment that Will found his release; Hannibal wrapped his arms around his young lover, holding Will close against him, feeling as though their bodies were truly as one, melding into each other in every way.

They were intertwined, not just their bodies, but their very souls. The fabric of their lives was woven together in an intricate way that could never be separated.

Finally, at long last, he knew what it felt like to truly *belong*.

What He Wants

Chapter Summary

It's taken Will a while to figure out just what he wants from his relationship with Hannibal, but now he's sure of his expectations.

Will sat up slowly, rubbing the sleep from his eyes and pushing the covers back.

This was far from the first time he'd awakened in Hannibal's bed, but somehow, this day felt different from any other. Maybe it was because he'd had some sort of epiphany while he slept.

He didn't know just what had caused it, but as he'd slowly awakened, realizing that Hannibal had already gone downstairs to make them breakfast, a resolution had come over him, one that was stronger than any other he'd ever had. It was a realization of his future, one that he should have had a long time ago.

He didn't have to turn himself over to Hannibal to recover who he was. He didn't have to submerge himself in anyone. He simply had to be himself, to accept what had happened and move past it.

Hannibal was helping him to do that, simply by being his lover and accepting him exactly as he was. That acceptance, more than anything else, had gone a long way towards placating his fears and helping him to become physically intimate with Hannibal again. Now, he felt no fear of the future, or of their physical involvement.

It was as though that fear had completely melted away in the warmth and light of Hannibal's patience with him. He wouldn't have expected that of his boyfriend if he hadn't experienced it for himself.

Hannibal had been more patient and loving than Will had ever thought he could be.

That patience had brought Will back into the light, had made him feel a trust and confidence that he'd begun to think he could never feel again. Thanks to Hannibal his fears were gone.

A part of him had thought that the only way he could recover what had been lost of himself, the way he had been before all of this had happened, was to immerse himself completely within his lover, to give himself to Hannibal so thoroughly that nothing was left of *him*, that he made himself into exactly what Hannibal wanted.

But that wasn't what he needed. That wasn't what would help him. What he needed was to be himself, an equal partner with his lover, not a subjugated slave.

If he had gone that route, then a part of him would had always been hidden, a part of him that would always want to assert itself and would always be pushed down. Will was thankful that he'd realized in time what a mistake it would have been to do that; if he'd let himself go that route, he'd have ended up regretting it.

He was fairly sure that Hannibal had already known that would be a mistake, but his boyfriend had allowed him to find that out on his own, without pushing him in any single direction.

Hannibal seemed to know what he needed better than he himself did.
That was almost a scary feeling, to realize that someone else knew him better than he knew himself. He'd never let himself get that close to anyone before.

Until Hannibal had come barreling into his life, he had always been afraid of getting too close to anyone. He'd thought that his empathy would once again make him a pariah, an outcast, that the person he reached out to would back away in horror, or that they wouldn't want to be around him.

But it hadn't been that way with Hannibal. This man had accepted him exactly as he was, with no reservations and no hesitation. Hannibal had wanted him. Had *loved* him.

Was what they shared love? Will asked himself. Or was it merely desire? He thought it was love, and Hannibal had even said those words to him more than once.

Why was he hesitating? Did he still believed that his empathy set him apart from the rest of the world, that he was on the outside looking in and always would be? Or was he holding back because he was afraid of taking that next step, afraid of letting himself go completely and giving his heart and soul to one person?

He'd always been afraid of love. Falling in love had seemed too much like submerging his identity into another person, letting them take him over. But wasn't that what he'd been planning to do anyway?

But giving his heart was vastly different than merely giving his body.

He'd given his heart to Hannibal already. He knew that in his soul, even if his mind didn't want to admit it yet. It was time for him to acknowledge that fact, and to revel in it.

His stubborn mind hadn't wanted to admit that he belonged to Hannibal; he had been afraid to acknowledge his true feelings, afraid that they wouldn't be reciprocated. But they *were*, and he knew that. Hannibal had proven his love when he had come to rescue Will, when he'd saved his life.

He could see Hannibal's love in those dark eyes whenever the other man looked at him as they were making love. There was no way to doubt Hannibal's feelings, no reason for him to have any doubts.

Will almost felt ashamed of himself for taking so long to reach this epiphany, to make up his mind about what he should do. How long had Hannibal been waiting for him to come to this

conclusion? He'd been so patient, so loving, and Will had spent far too much time pushing him away because he didn't know what he wanted.

He had been confused about what he should do -- even about what he *wanted* to do -- but the scales had fallen away from his eyes now, and he was seeing clearly.

He didn't have to make himself Hannibal's subject. He only had to be Hannibal's lover.

He had to open himself up to the love that Hannibal held out to him, and to the emotions that were in his own heart. He merely had to accept them, and hold them close to him.

Instead of trying to see what was going to happen in the future, to predict it, he would simply take things one day at a time, and enjoy them as he went along. And he would share those days, as well as that future, with Hannibal. What he felt for the man who was his lover would only grow stronger with time.

Hannibal was the man he wanted to be with, and he didn't need to submerge his own identity into that of his lover to prove the strength of his feelings, or to overcome any traumas of the past.

They would move forward together, and if there were problems, they would confront those problems as the couple they were, as well as in their own individual ways. He didn't have to lose himself to be part of a couple; he could retain his own identity, as well as establish one that linked him with someone else.

Why had it taken him so long to realize that was what he wanted to do? Will didn't know the answer to that question, but it didn't really matter. All that matter was that he'd finally figured out what he wanted.

Now he just had to ascertain that it was what Hannibal wanted as well.

Change For Love

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal makes some decisions about what he has to do to ensure that he has a future with Will.

Hannibal stared down at the counter, the movement of his hands stilled.
He had been thinking quite a lot this morning since he had come downstairs to make breakfast, and he'd come to some definite conclusions about his future.

Heaving a sigh, he began to work at the omelet again, chopping parsley and red peppers to add to the scrambled eggs and ham. His movements were automatic, he didn't need to think about cooking something so simple. He had decided to make omelets for their breakfast today, as he knew they were one of Will's favorites.

He enjoyed doing little things like this for Will -- making his favorite meals, being here in the kitchen when he came downstairs to have his morning coffee and handing his lover the full mug.

To his surprise, he realized that he wanted to live the rest of his life this way, with Will as the center of that life. He wanted the two of them to share their days and nights, to form a bond that would be unbreakable. Will had become more to him than simply someone who was passing through his life.

He had known that he was in love with Will from that terrifying moment in that basement prison, when he'd thought that he had lost the young man for good, that Will was dead.

But he hadn't realized just how much he loved Will until now.

Somehow, Will Graham had woven himself into the very fabric of Hannibal's existence, becoming the center of his world. He could no longer imagine a life without Will by his side.

At one point, Hannibal had thought that he could keep Will at arm's length, that he would be satisfied to have the young man in his life as nothing more than a friend, a colleague, and a sometime lover. But now he knew that he wanted far more than that from their relationship. He wanted a complete commitment.

And that would involve making some radical changes to his life. He would have to change if he wanted to keep Will; there was no question about that.

Will would never accept him as he was now. He would have to clean up his act, change so much about himself that he had always thought would be a part of him. Those changes

wouldn't be easy, and it would be a struggle to turn away from things that had become as much as part of him as drawing breath.

But having Will in his life would be worth making those changes, he told himself firmly. If those changes weren't made, then he would certainly lose Will, and that wasn't an option.

First, he would have to stop killing and eating people.

Would he be able to stop doing something that had become such an intrinsic part of him? he asked himself as his hands continued their automatic movements. Could he even contemplate doing so?

He had to. If he didn't, then Will was already lost to him. And really, he *had* been turning away from that more and more lately. Somehow, it just didn't seem right, not when Will was spending so much time with him. It felt somehow disloyal to his young lover to make meals out of the Chesapeake Ripper's victims.

The Ripper would have to die an unlamented death; Hannibal would have to stop committing those crimes, and lay that part of who he was to rest for good.

That was something he would struggle with; he had no doubts about that. But he also didn't doubt his own inner strength, his ability to do whatever he set his mind to.

He *would* overcome that need to kill. He would do it for Will, for their future together. He would do it because it was what Will would want him to do if he knew that his lover was the Chesapeake Ripper. For Will, he would manage to do anything. He didn't have a choice in the matter, not if he wanted to keep Will's love.

Will loved him; he had no doubts about that, either. Will wouldn't have been able to give his body so completely after what had been done to him if he didn't have complete trust in his lover.

He could see that love shining in Will's blue eyes whenever the young man looked at him.

He'd thought when he had first started this relationship that he would get his fill of Will, and then dispatch him. But he had long since realized that there was no way he could do that.

Killing Will would be a tragedy, a travesty. He could never bring himself to take the life of the person he loved; he might have thought that he would be able to do so when this had all started, but he hadn't counted on his feelings for Will becoming much stronger than his need to take lives.

Will's life was precious to him. He'd known that ever since he had held his lover's lifeless body in his arms and sobbed, when he had thought that it was the end and he had lost Will forever.

Losing his lover wasn't an option; he wasn't even going to consider it. He recoiled from the idea of taking Will's life; if he had ever thought that he could do so, then he had been fooling

himself. Even at the beginning of their relationship, he should have known that he could never put an end to the man he loved.

He had never thought he could feel this way about anyone, and that threw a monkey wrench into the plans he had made so long ago. But he was nothing if not adaptable.

Plans changed. Feelings changed, and his had grown and developed.

He had changed since he'd met Will; their relationship had made him a better person, and he was discovering that he *liked* who he had become, liked him better than the person he used to be.

With Will by his side, those changes would keep happening, and he would come to like who he was even more. And, Hannibal told himself, more importantly, he wouldn't be alone. He would have someone to share his life with, someone who brought out the good in him, someone who would love and cherish him.

Perhaps Will couldn't love the person he was now, but he *would* put his life of killing behind him. He could, and would, do that for the man he had lost his heart to.

What was killing, compared to a lifetime with Will? He was finding that his murders didn't give him the satisfaction that they used to; the only things that gave him happiness now was being with his lover, feeling that his heart beat in Rhythm with Will's, they they were attuned to each other and that he was loved and needed.

Yes, he *would* change, Hannibal told himself as he slid the two omelets onto plates and put them on the table. For Will, he would do all that he could to become a better man. He *could* change for love.

It might not be easy, but he could accomplish anything as long as he had Will by his side.

Trying New Things

Chapter Summary

Hannibal makes Will an offer he can't refuse.

"Hey," Will said by way of greeting as he walked into Hannibal's kitchen.

The other man looked up, a smile on his lips as he gazed at his boyfriend. "Good morning, Will," he said, his voice very soft. "Did you sleep well?"

"I slept great," Will told him, going to the coffeepot and pouring himself a cup of coffee, then adding a little sugar. "How about you?" he asked, leaning against the counter and watching Hannibal.

The other man was making pancakes, and Will couldn't help admiring his dexterity as he flipped them over expertly. He enjoyed watching his lover cook; Hannibal was more at ease in the kitchen than anyone Will had ever known, and he sometimes wondered why Hannibal hadn't become a chef.

"I slept wonderfully, after our activities earlier in the evening," Hannibal said softly, turning around to glance at Will. "That is always a good way to ensure that I will sleep very well indeed."

Will blushed at the words, and at the look that Hannibal sent him. It was a look that told him the other man wouldn't mind continuing those activities after they had breakfast.

And he certainly wouldn't mind that, either. Not at all.

"Why didn't you decide to become a chef instead of a doctor?" he asked, changing the subject abruptly in the hopes that he would stop blushing. "You're always so at home in the kitchen."

"Cooking is one of my hobbies, but I do not believe that I could ever have made it my life's work," Hannibal told him as he slid a stack of pancakes onto a plate. "My tastes are too .... esoteric."

Will had to smile again at those words; Hannibal was right about that. He had never had such exotic foods as he had since they had begun dating; there were times when he had no idea what he was eating, but whatever it was, he could never turn it down. Hannibal was a marvelous cook.

"Though I have decided to become more commonplace in my meals," Hannibal told Will as he sat down across from him. "I am finding that I enjoy more .... everyday fare lately."

"That's not entirely a bad thing, is it?" Will asked him as he poured syrup onto his pancakes. "Mixing it up a little, I mean. It's always good to try new things."

Hannibal nodded and smiled, leaning back and studying Will across the table.

"I believe that trying new things is always good," he said softly, forking some pancakes into his mouth. There was silence for a few moments as Will waited for him to speak again.

"If we don't try new things, then we just stagnate," Will told him, eating another forkful of the delicious, fluffy pancakes. "These are really good," he added after he had chewed and swallowed.

Hannibal nodded, sipping his coffee before clearing his throat to speak. "You are certainly right about that, Will. If we do not try new things, then we simply tread water, and we never move forward with our lives. Which is why I have decided to try something new, and I hope that you'll agree with it."

Will almost held his breath; his blue eyes widened, and he put his fork down, staring at Hannibal. What did his boyfriend mean? What was he going to try?

Was this the moment when Hannibal would tell him that they were over, that this "new thing" he wanted to try meant that he had tired of their relationship and was moving on to someone new?

"I have decided that I would like for you to move in with me," Hannibal said, his voice firm and steady, just as his gaze was. His eyes never left Will's face; Will felt as though the other man was trying to reach into his very soul, to gauge his reaction to those words.

He hadn't expected Hannibal to say that; he couldn't hold back a gasp of surprise. "Y-you want me to move in here? You mean .... permanently? What about my house in Wolf Trap?"

Hannibal smiled as he leaned forward, still gazing directly into Will's eyes. "We should keep your house. It would be a good place to go to get away from the city when we feel the need."

Will had so many questions that he didn't know where to start first.

But behind all the questions, behind the surprise that he was still trying to fathom, there was relief. Hannibal didn't want to break it off with him. Far from it.

No, Hannibal was holding out something that Will hadn't realized he wanted desperately until this very moment -- he was giving Will the chance to take a huge step forward in their relationship.

Moving in with Hannibal would be not just a step, but a *leap* forward. Still, hadn't they been leading up to this? Wasn't this just another phase of their relationship, one that they had to deal with if they intended to have a future with each other, and to try new things?

He couldn't be afraid of this. He had to accept it as a natural progression, and decide whether this was the right time for ti to happen, or if he felt that he should wait.

Will already knew the answer to that question, even before it formed in his mind. Of course he was ready. He loved this man, and he wanted their relationship to move ahead.

He *would* move in with Hannibal, as soon as he possibly could.

There were a lot o things to take care of first, but he would manage them. No, they would do that *together*. Just another way of strengthening their bond.

With a start, Will realized that Hannibal was still gazing at him, as though waiting for him to say something. Oh, right. He hadn't given his boyfriend a definitive answer yet.

"I think I want to try new things, too," he said, the words coming out slowly. "I want to move in with you, Hannibal. I want our relationship to move forward, into the next phase. It might not be the easiest thing I've ever done, but I'm willing to try if you are. I'm ready for that next step."

Hannibal nodded, then smiled -- a smile that made WIll's heart turn over in his chest. There was no way that he could have turned down this chance. Not when Hannibal looked at him like that.

He was more than ready to try something new. If it didn't work out .... *No*, Will told himself firmly. He wasn't going to think like that. He was going to be completely positive about this.

Not only was this new life going to work out, it was going to be extraordinary.

Best of Both Worlds

Chapter Summary

> Even though he's nervous about moving in with Hannibal, Will is glad that he's taken that step into his future.

Will took a deep breath, looking around the foyer of Hannibal's house.

It was hard to believe that as of today, he lived here. Oh, he still had his house in Wolf Trap, and a lot of his belongings were still there. But from now on, this was *his home*.

He could still call Wolf Trap home, too. He and Hannibal would go there on the weekends, and maybe even for a night during the week here and there. It was a good place to get away to.

But for all intents and purposes, he lived here in Baltimore now. Hannibal had even accepted the dogs into his home, though Will was sure that he'd done so reluctantly. It was amazing what his boyfriend had decided that he could put up with to have Will living here.

It didn't seem possible that all of this had happened so quickly. Just two weeks, and he was here, a resident of this house that had always seemed to beckon to him.

He'd always liked this house, liked the comfortable feel of it. He would have thuoght that Hannibal's home would feel cold and sterile to him, but it didn't.

For some reason, this house had always felt warm and welcoming.

Maybe it was just because of the feelings that he had for the man who lived here, he reflected. Maybe he just found the house welcoming to him because Hannibal was.

But he hadn't always felt that way, had he? Will's brow furrowed as he thought back, remembering how nervous he'd felt the first few times he'd come here. He had even had that nervous, jumpy feeling on the night that Hannibal had first indicated that he was interested in Will as more than a patient.

Or had that nervousness only come about because he had felt the same way, and he had been afraid to show it, and afraid to let Hannibal into his life so intimately?

Yes, that had to be it. He'd been overwhelmed by his fears then.

But there was no more fear, not now. He'd pushed all of that aside, and opened his arms and his heart to Hannibal. He had no reason to be afraid now.

Of course, he hadn't had any reason to be afraid then. He'd only been afraid of the unknown, of the new experiences that had been waiting for him.

He had successfully leapt the abyss where those fears dwelt, and now, he could feel sorry for the person he had been before Hannibal had come into his life as both his friend and his lover. He had been so afraid of so much, always holding himself back, never letting himself truly experience life.

He was a different person now. Being involved with Hannibal had made him more confident, brought him out of that self-imposed shell he'd always kept carefully constructed around himself.

That shell still existed, of course. He hadn't broken out of it completely. He still didn't trust many people, and he still wasn't comfortable in most social situations.

Most? he thought with an inward snort. Make that *all*.

That was something he'd have to get past, he told himself with a sigh. Hannibal gave parties; as Hannibal's significant other, he'd be expected to attend them all.

Except when he was working, of course, and he would probably be doing a lot of that. It felt as though the cases Jack was getting had been stepped up -- or maybe it was just that the Chesapeake Ripper was inspiring a lot of other serial killers to come out and display their work.

That thought sent a shiver down his spine. He didn't want to think that they would have to deal with even *more* killers. The ones already on their agenda were bad enough.

He would be closer to them now, really. A lot of the killings that he dealt with seemed to take place around Baltimore, much more than they did around Wolf Trap.

And he wouldn't be so isolated any more, which most people would see as a good thing, Will told himself. It was odd to feel that he'd given up a part of his privacy, but he wasn't going to let himself focus on that. He was losing something, yes, but he was gaining so much more.

What was giving up a little privacy, when he compared it to being here, spending every night with the man he'd fallen in love with? Wasn't giving up a little isolation a very small price to pay?

That was part of life. Compromise, a little bit of give and take.

He was gaining so much more than he was losing, really. After all, it wasn't as though he didn't still have his house in Wolf Trap. He could go there any time he wanted to.

He just wasn't living in that house on a daily basis now. But he would still be there at least one day of the week, and on the weekends. It was still his getaway, his retreat.

Now, he had something to add to that, another layer that would make the house in Wolf Trap even more precious to him. He was going to share it with Hannibal. They would get some

new furniture, do a bit of redecorating to make the house into a place that Hannibal would be more comfortable in.

They could get a bigger bed for his bedroom, maybe add a few other things. But it would essentially still be Will's house. Hannibal had made that perfectly clear.

Yes, they were entwining their lives, sharing more than they ever had. Yet they still had their own private spaces, as well. Moving in with Hannibal wasn't going to take that away from him.

He had the best of both worlds. He was really a very lucky man.

Even though there might be times that he would miss being in Wolf Trap, he couldn't help feeling that he was exactly where he belonged, where he'd always been meant to be.

It was a little scary to realize that he was embarking on the kind of relationship he'd never thought that he would have -- living with a lover on a daily basis. But it was time to take this step, and he'd thought about it a lot. He was doing the right thing -- and more, he was doing what he *wanted* to do.

For once in his life, he wasn't listening to any of his doubts and fears, or erring on the side of caution. He was making a bold step, listening to his heart instead of his head.

It might turn out to be a mistake, but if it was, then he would learn from it.

It didn't *feel* like a mistake, though. It felt like a big step, one that he was still a little nervous about, but a step in the right direction. The first step towards the rest of his life.

Most of his belongings that he was moving in here were still in boxes; he would have to start unpacking sometime later in the day, but for the moment, he wanted to sit down and relax for a while.

He wanted to let the fact sink in that he could look at this house as being his home now, that he actually *lived* here. Even the dogs were starting to settle in; they were outside in the back yard, sniffing around, and he hoped that they would enjoy living here as much as he was sure that he would.

Will didn't doubt that it would take a while to get used to this new phase of his life, but i wasn't as though he'd never faced changes before. He had always been able to adapt fairly well.

He'd do that this time, too. Only this time, he wouldn't be so much adapting as settling in and making sure that he was comfortable with the life that he'd chosen.

So far, he couldn't see any clouds in the happy future that stretched ahead of him.

Where His Heart Resides

Chapter Summary

Home is not a place. It's wherever the person you love is.

"Home is not a place, Will," Hannibal said softly, placing a hand on Will's shoulder.

Will swallowed hard and nodded, looking around him at the living room of the house in Wolf Trap. The furniture was still here, but somehow, it didn't feel the same.

He loved this house and always would, but he no longer lived here on a regular basis. He and Hannibal would come here on weekends, and the occasional day during the week.

The house didn't feel abandoned, but it still didn't really feel like his home any more. It was a wrenching thought; this place had been his refuge for so long that it was hard to think of giving it up. As much as he liked living with Hannibal, it was still hard to realize that he had changed domiciles.

He felt as though he'd been uprooted, in a way, even though he had made his own decision to move in with his lover. He hadn't been forced or coerced in any way.

It just felt very strange to know that he wasn't coming back here after work every night any more, that the dogs really didn't live here, and that it was just a country getaway now.

It was no longer his private refuge, his place to hide away from the world.

He didn't have to do that any more, Will reminded himself. There was no reason for him to hide away. He had taken a step forward, and that step included being more social.

Being Hannibal's lover had pushed him into that. Hannibal knew a lot of people, and once they had gone public with their relationship, everyone had been curious about him.

Maybe it hadn't been the smartest thing to do, to let everyone know that they were now living together. Maybe they should have eased into it, so it wouldn't seem so sudden, or come as such a shock. But Will was sure that a lot of people had already realized that there was something between the two of them.

They hadn't really hidden it, but they'd never been upfront and open about their relationship, either. They hadn't felt a need to be, but things had changed.

Now that he was living with Hannibal, his entire life had changed. He hadn't just left his home and his refuge, but he had committed himself to a whole new way of life.

He no longer went home at night alone, to let the dogs out for a run in the woods around his house and make dinner, then do preparation for his next day's lectures at Quantico or settle down to read a book. No, now he had a boyfriend, a person to spend his evenings with.

It still felt a little awkward to him, but Will was sure that he would get used to having someone around on a regular basis in time. It wasn't like the didn't *want* Hannibal there.

He had made the decision to push the envelope, to change his life. And if it wasn't exactly what he'd envisioned it to be, it was still a life that he could appreciate and enjoy.

Hannibal was right. This house wasn't really a home. It didn't *feel* like a home.

A home was where the person you cared about most was. A home was a place that was warmed by loved, a place that fit you like a second skin, a place that embraced you.

Hannibal's house might not do all of that yet, but Will was confident that in time, it would. He just had to get used to the idea of living with someone, which wasn't easy for him.

That house didn't feel like a home to him yet, but it would eventually. He was already getting used to it; the dogs seemed to love it there, even though they didn't have so much space to run and play in. But there was a dog park nearby, and Will had already taken them there once.

"Home isn't a place," he repeated, his words barely audible. "This place was never really a home because I was always alone in it, except for the dogs."

"Home is where your heart is, Will," Hannibal answered, his own voice soft and husky. "And if I may take the liberty of saying so, I believe that your heart is with me."

Will turned to his lover with a smile and a nod.

"It is," he whispered, closing his eyes as Hannibal's arms slid around him. He leaned against the taller man, emotion flooding through him and making it hard to speak.

Yes, his home was wherever his heart resided, and he knew that it was with Hannibal. They would make the house in Baltimore a happy place, a place where love and joy rang out.

Together, he and Hannibal would turn the house in Baltimore, that big, rambling place, into the home that this smaller house in Wolf Trap had never really been. It had been his home, but it had always been a lonely place. It had never felt as though it was filled with love.

The two of them would make sure that their home was a place that they both loved, a place where they both felt loved and welcomed. It would become the home that he'd never had before.

Looking around one last time, Will walked to the door of the house, then outside and down the front steps. They would be back next weekend, just to get away from the city for a while.

For now, they were going home, to the place where he now kept his heart.

A New Era

Chapter Summary

Hannibal contemplates what he'll have to give up in the future to make a life with Will.

It was the end of one era, and the beginning of another.

Hannibal smiled as he poured two glasses of wine; he would be done here in the kitchen in just a few minutes, and then he and Will could sit down to dinner.

He hadn't realized just how pleasant it would be to have someone to cook for, someone to eat dinner with, someone to keep him company at night.

Not to mention that it was extremely pleasant to have a lover in his bed every night -- especially a lover that he actually, well, *loved*. He didn't know when this emotion had become the guiding aspect of his life, but somehow, it had, and he didn't regret it at all.

He was going to change his life now that Will was a part of it, now that his young lover was living with him. He wouldn't change every aspect, but some things had to stop.

There would be no more killing. As hard as it would be to stop doing what had become second nature to him, Hannibal knew that he couldn't continue.

It would be far too easy to slip up, and for Will to find out.

If Will found out, then their new life would stop in an instant. Not only would his boyfriend back away from his in disgust, but he would probably find himself behind bars.

Will had far too developed a sense of morality to let him go free if he knew that he was the Chesapeake Ripper. There was no way his killings could go on.

If he wanted a life with Will, so much that he was used to doing had to come to a complete halt. It wouldn't be easy for him, but he would do it. Will was worth it, Hannibal told himself. The satisfaction he felt when he was close to Will would be his recompense, and he was sure that it would be enough.

He *would* start a new life, and he *would* be happy in it. He would stop his unusual practices in cuisine, and be like .... well, like a *normal* person.

He'd never attempted to do that, not in his entire life. But he wanted to do so now. For Will. For this new era they were starting as a couple, this new life that they were creating together.

This was what he wanted, more than he had ever wanted anything. He wanted to take a few steps back from the person he had been, and lean how to fit into his new role, into the person he would become. He wanted to let Will help him with that, for their relationship to be a true partnership.

Will could never be what he was. There was no way that he could bring his lover into the darkness of his world, not unless he wanted to destroy everything that Will was.

That wasn't what he wanted at all. He didn't want to sully Will in any way; he wanted this young man to remain the pure, sparkling diamond that he was. Will shouldn't have to change.

Hannibal would be the one who would change. He was ready for it. He could do it.

It wasn't going to be easy, but he would make the effort -- and he would stick to it. For Will. For their relationship. For the future that they would build together.

He had accepted that he loved Will, and that he wanted this young man to be by his side forever. He didn't want to lose Will,and keeping him meant making some changes in himself.

Those changes would usher in a new era of his life, one that he had never thought he could live, but one that he was ready to embrace. The old instincts would be hard to push away, but he would take things one day at a time, and step by step, he would become the man that Will would want him to be.

The steaks he had broiled were done. Hannibal carefully arranged them on two plates, then put the plates on a tray with the glasses of wine and picked it up.

Will was waiting for him in the dining room, where Hannibal had told him to stay. Tonight, they would have dinner, then they would go upstairs and make love.

Yes, the beginning of a new era. One that he was quite looking forward to.

Whatever the Future Might Hold

Chapter Summary

> Facing the future with Hannibal might not always be easy, but Will is ready for the challenge.

Will could feel a subtle change in their relationship.

He didn't know just what it was, but he could sense that something was different. There was some change in the way that Hannibal looked at him.

He could feel that change in the air around him; it almost felt as though some issues had been settled, things that he hadn't even known were in question.

Somehow, everything just felt more .... well, maybe *peaceful* was the word. Hannibal seemed more composed than he ever had; it was as though he had made some sort of decision, and that it had taken a weight off his shoulders. Whatever it was, Will couldn't begin to imagine.

But if that decision, whatever it might be, had made Hannibal feel better, if it had made their relationship more stable and secure, then Will was all for it.

Would this be what their future would be like? he thought, stealing a glance at his lover across the table. Would they always be this comfortable with each other?

He doubted it. Their relationship would never be an easy one.

But he knew that he could count on being loved, and on having there for him. He had no doubt of the feelings that his lover bore for him. None whatsoever.

Through the years, those feelings would only grow stronger; Will was sure of that. He and Hannibal had the kind of relationship where emotions were given room to develop; they would never burn out. The flame would always spark for them; the intensity would never sputter and die.

He didn't doubt that they would have their moments of anger through the coming years together; they would have times when they would argue, even fight, perhaps physically.

But through it all, through anything that might be thrown at them, anything that their relationship might have to endure, they would always love each other.

Hannibal had proved that love when he had risked his own life to rescue Will from a killer, when he had held Will in his arms and brought him back from the other side with the

intensity of that love. He could never doubt that Hannibal loved him, and that he would be safe within that love.

Whatever the future might hold for them, he looked forward to it. As long as that future was spent with Hannibal, Will knew that he would be happy.

He'd thrown his lot in with this man, and he intended to stay here.

Impulsively, he reached across the table to capture Hannibal's hand in his own, twining their fingers together. The other man's head came up, his dark eyes surprised.

Will squeezed Hannibal's hand gently, smiling at his lover. He was sure that Hannibal could read what was in his heart; the two of them didn't need words to understand each other.

His love could be read in the expression on his face, the look in his eyes, the clasp of his fingers on Hannibal's. He didn't need to speak aloud for his boyfriend to know what he was trying to say; they would be able to communicate with just a look, just a single touch.

The look in those dark eyes told him that Hannibal understood his touch, and that he agreed. Whatever the future held for them through the years, he was ready to face it. Together.

Will could almost feel his heart swelling with the love he felt for Hannibal. He didn't need to say the words; he knew how he felt, and he knew that Hannibal felt it, too.

Whatever their future brought, he would love this man to the end.

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